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Thursday December 28 1995

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

46,434

Ian Katz on a memory of a murder

Lost innocence

G2 with European weather

OnLine

Giant pandas search for a home

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Worst apology, worst speech, best Majorism

Simon Hoggart's 1995 parliamentary awards

This section page 11

Tories try to calm jitters

Poll rout fears for party's future

Michael White
Political Editor

TORY strategists are organising a rearguard action to prevent John Major being forced into a premature general election in 1996 and to minimise the scale of the expected rout if they fail.

With ministers aware that poll defeat could trigger civil war in the party or even see it split, as Labour did after its traumatic 1979 defeat, the exotic possibility of a vote-catching summer budget before an October election is even being canvassed as a desperate option at Conservative Central Office.

To add to the jittery mood a leading firm of City actuaries Lane, Clark & Peacock, predicted the most likely number of deaths among Conservative MPs in 1996 will be four — more than enough to deprive Mr Major of his theoretical majority of five if their seats are lost. The actuaries point out the special pressures MPs are under, a point underlined by the sudden death of ex-whip Sir David Lightbown this month — leaving his Staffordshire SW seat an easy target for Labour in March.

A further note of uncertainty arose yesterday when Downing Street confirmed that Rod Lynes, the private secretary central to Mr Major's delicate Northern Ireland peace negotiations for the past two years, is to go on secondment to industry in the new year, working for an even more beleaguered employer, British Gas. On his return Mr Lynes, aged 43, will go to his old department, the Foreign Office.

To rub salt into new year wounds, the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, intervened to predict that the Prime Minister will not fulfil his ambition to soldier on until April or May 1997, the last legal election date.

The pre-Christmas revival of the Tory Euro-sceptic rebellion, over fishing and, potentially next year, over the single currency, has added to business managers' gloom.

What is at stake for senior Tories is not so much the survival of the Government, hopes for which many have abandoned, but the survival of the party. Gloom-mongers are privately saying that a rightwing rump in a new Commons electing Michael Portillo as Mr Major's successor would trigger the split which ministers have struggled to avoid.

Previously little-noticed compromise candidates for the leadership, — such as Malcolm Rifkind and Ian Lang — have begun entering MPs' calculations as they examine the divisive potential of the usual suspects: Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke on the left, Mr Portillo and John Redwood on the right.

Ill-founded rumours that moderate MPs like Robert Hicks and Emma Nicholson were going to join the Liberal Democrats have repeatedly surfaced in Westminster or the City — scornfully denied by the MPs in question — matched occasionally by predicted defections on the right to Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party.

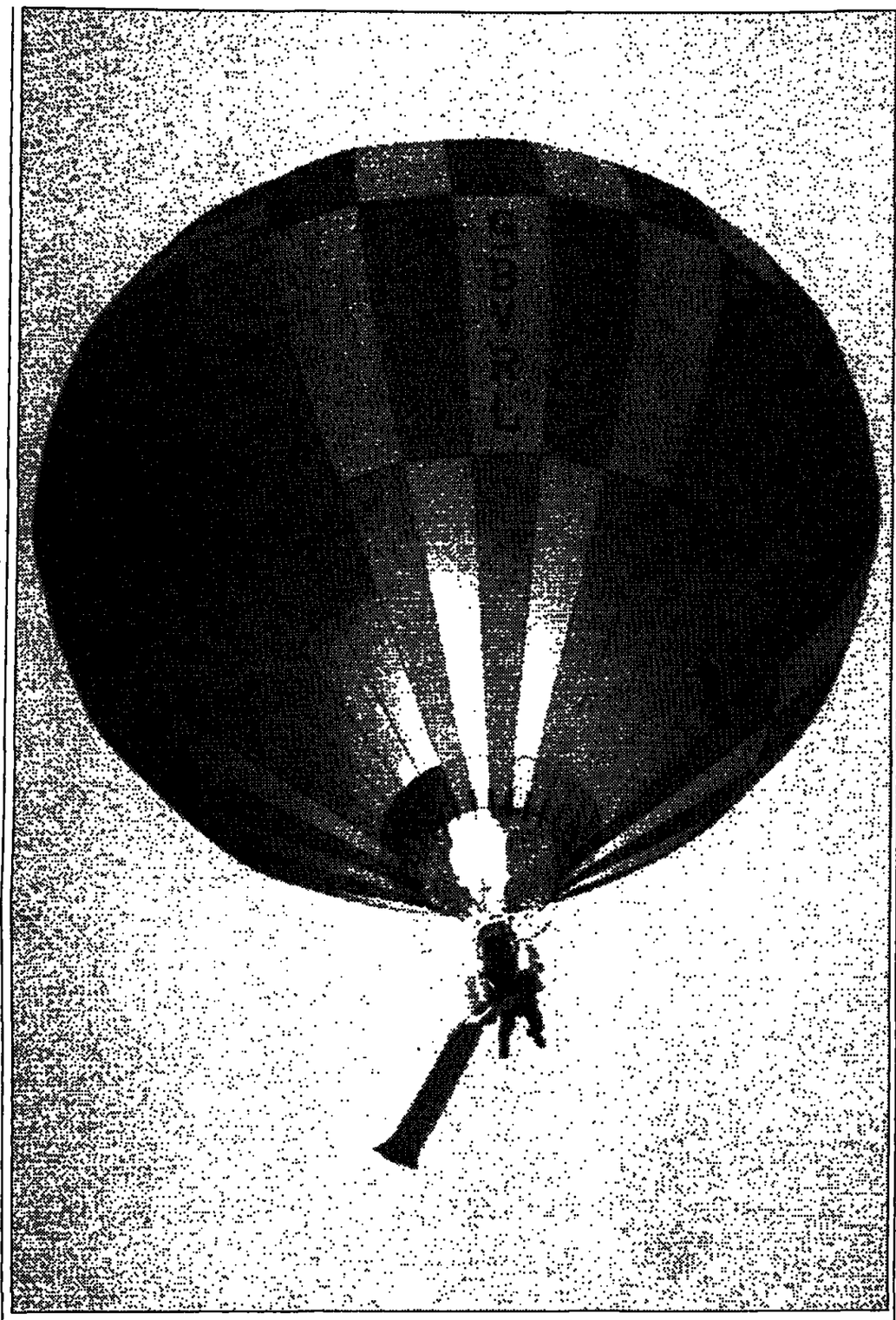
Tory officials confirm that they have circled five potential election dates, with April 10 or May 1 1997 on the top of Mr Major's list. The others are said to be October 10 or November 14, after an early tax-cutting budget, and — for the first time in 70 years — a pre-Christmas poll on December 12.

The desire to keep the Opposition off-balance renders such talk at least 50 per cent black propaganda. MPs know that minority governments can stagger on for many months.

Tony Blair is 30 per cent ahead in most polls and taking few risks of provoking target groups of floating voters. As Labour spokesmen again weighed into government "betrayals" on tax, jobs and even home ownership yesterday, Mr Ashdown made a calculated attack on Labour's ambiguous stance on Europe.

"If the Prime Minister leads a divided party, with lack of leadership and without a capacity to stake out a clear position, I am afraid to say that the same precisely applies to the Labour Party. I can't tell the difference between the two on this great issue," he told ITN.

Simon Hoggart, page 11



Hospital registrar Marcus Green, aged 32, claimed to be the coldest man in Britain yesterday, braving temperatures of -44C as he flew at 15,500ft in his hot air balloon from West Midlands Safari Park, Worcestershire PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN JAMES

Happy Eater sell-off may save Forte

Lisa Buckingham

THE pressure for Granada to raise its offer for hotel group Forte intensified yesterday as Sir Rocco Forte announced a £1.05 billion deal to sell his company's roadside cafés and budget hotels to Whitbread.

The sale of establishments such as Little Chef, Happy Eater and Welcome Break is conditional on the failure of Granada's £3.4 billion takeover bid. Forte is expected to tempt shareholders to stay loyal by committing some of the £1.05 billion to a special dividend payout.

Granada yesterday dismissed suggestions that it has been badly wrong-footed by the deal. In the face of growing City speculation that the company will have to offer more than £4 billion to win, the company declined to say whether it would raise its bid. It has until Jan 9 to do so.

Forte is expected to turn the screw further with the announcement next week that its portfolio of hotels has been revalued at £3.1 billion after having been written down by by £500 million two years ago at the bottom of the hotels cycle. The group's assets include the Grosvenor House on London's Park Lane, the George V in Paris as well as the Meridien chain and the more modest Forte Posthouses.

Sir Rocco, Forte's chairman, said yesterday he regarded the deal as swinging the balance of the bid — which is unlikely to be decided much before the end of January — "conclusively in our favour". He said the Whitbread brewing and retail group was paying a "very good premium price" for the businesses, which also include the French motorway service operator, Coté France.

But this claim was dismissed by Granada's chief executive, Gerry Robinson, who criticised Forte for securing only a modest price which included no premium for control of the business and would result in a tax charge of up to £100 million for Forte shareholders.

He added: "Forte's break-up plan is an admission of its management's failure to obtain a reasonable return on its assets. Shareholders should question whether it serves their interests to sell a major part of the group in a hurry at a time when it is performing so badly."

Forte has admitted that the performance of its roadside restaurants business has deteriorated, but Sir Rocco denied this meant they were being sold on the cheap when recovery was possible.

Peter Jarvis, chief executive of Whitbread, described the price as fair. The company has no plans to save costs with redundancies but it expects to make big economies on distribution and purchasing which will make the deal profitable.

Sir Rocco has forecast that Granada would raise hotel prices and axe 4,000 jobs if it gained control of Forte. In contrast Whithread — which has created 5,000 new jobs this year — "has an excellent reputation as an employer and as a manager and developer of brands," he said yesterday.

The purchase would make Whitbread the largest owner of budget hotels. It would overtake McDonald's as the biggest buyer of restaurant food in the country. Whitbread already owns restaurants such as Beefeater, Brewers Fayre, Pizza Hut and TGI Friday's and it has a chain of budget hotels known as Travel Inn.

Whitbread said it will probably merge the Travelodge and Travel Inn chains but will allow the Happy Eater and Little Chef names to survive. The acquisition did not imply Whitbread was moving out of brewing.

Sir Rocco said the price was above what Forte could expect from a separate stock market flotation.

Nifty footwork, page 2;
Pass notes, G2, page 3

Paris denies trade-off with Serbs

Paul Webster in Paris

FRANCE yesterday vehemently denied making a deal to protect the Bosnian Serb military commander, General Ratko Mladic, from war crime charges after a newspaper reported that the two French pilots shot down on a bombing mission were tortured while under the general's control.

The dramatic release of the pilots on the eve of the Paris peace conference — after 104 days in captivity — made the Nato deployment possible and fuelled speculation of a deal that would allow Bosnian Serb leaders indicted for war crimes to avoid trial. The ease with which Nato troops have been able to deploy and the co-operative behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs — who yesterday began their withdrawal from around Sarajevo — has added to suspicions of an implicit trade-off.

Leaked details of a debriefing of Captain Frédéric Chiffot and Lieutenant José Sauvignet, contradict their public statements that the Geneva convention on prisoners of war was respected. The two men were reportedly subjected to beatings, starvation, mock executions and solitary confinement but were told not to speak of the role played by the Bosnian Serb general who faces charges of war crimes.

A French foreign ministry spokesman, Yves Doutriaux, said France stood by denials made when the men returned to France on December 12 that no deal had been made.

"Both before and after the aircrew's release, we said there were no discussions with Serbs on special conditions," he added. "We said it then and we repeat it now."

Military sources yesterday confirmed that the men were badly treated after they were shot down near Pale on August 30 during an attack on an ammunition dump. But, according to the official version, the men were attacked only by civilians, who broke the lieutenant's nose.

Le Canard Enchainé said that during the flight to Paris on December 12, a French general ordered the two men to tell the press that the Geneva convention had been respected. Quoting secret service sources, Le Canard Enchainé said the men were fired on while parachuting to safety, but each broke a leg on landing and could not escape when confronted by a farmer carrying a shotgun.

Soon afterwards, they were surrounded by soldiers and beaten up. They were then

Turn to page 3, column 4

Serb withdrawal, page 7
Leader comment, page 10

Royal traveller from the east bearing cash and a team of bodyguards furnishes a store-owner's dream

Martin Barnett: 'He liked it'

Lawrence Donegan

THE sales kicked off yesterday with a surreal variation on the Christmas theme when a traveller from the east arrived in London bearing £350,000 and left with the entire contents of a soft furnishings store.

In this case the bearer, reportedly a member of the Qatar royal family, bought everything on the first day of the sale at Charlotte's, a shop with an olde worlde theme near Marble Arch.

Martin Barnett, the shop's owner, said everything — including fixtures and fittings — was to be shipped to Dubai in the Arab Emirates, where it would be used to create a replica of the London store as a present for a new wife.

"His third wife had been in during the summer and he said she liked the concept. He owns the equivalent of Brent Cross from what I can make out," Mr Barnett said.

The sheik, who declined to give his name, had been guided to Charlotte's by a "SALE" sign in the window. He arrived at the shop with four bodyguards. "There was a crowd of people waiting for my sale to start and everyone was astonished. His English wasn't very good and he thought the shop was for sale but I said 'no, but there is a sale in the shop'.

"He wanted to buy the lot, including the wooden floor and roof beams. He bought nine sofas, tables, lamps, chairs, a penny-farthing, teddy bears and candles. He even wanted to buy the embroidery machine with which we monogram our furniture.

"He was genuine. He gave me some cash and later I received a fax from his bank and a cheque for the remainder of the deposit," he said.

Mr Barnett said his business suffered a set-back before Christmas when a French customer cancelled a £70,000 order. "It was a disaster at the time but this more than makes up for it."

Sketch, page 2; Festive fillip for retailers, page 12

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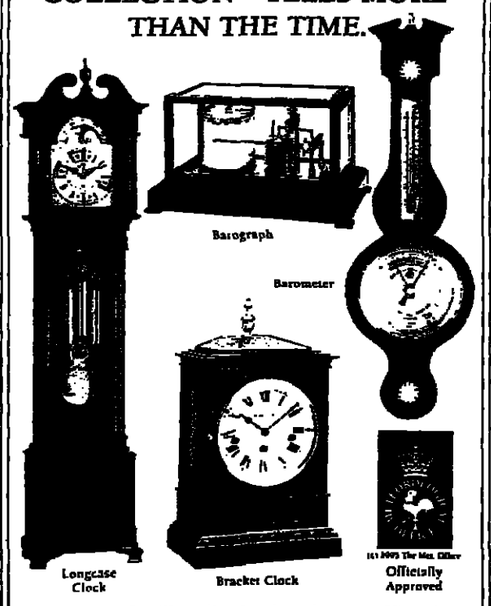

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Sketch

Bargain hunters go for broke

David Ward

SHOPPING spokesmen reported Shetland situations yesterday as sales blizzards began battering frozen Britain.

Severe till warnings were issued at Merry Hill in Dudley, and Next at Meadow Hall in Sheffield was said to be impassable, with heavy drifting of bargain hunters.

In Manchester, the upper reaches of Kendal Mile, the city's leading department store, were attainable only with special care since most of the escalators were out of action. Shopping turned into mass step aerobics, with the masses toiling wearily to the fifth floor and down again, many forgetting to stop off at the sales floors *en route*.

Trade was brisk in duvets and Le Creuset pots as northerners prepared to throw togs and venison casseroles into the battle against sub-zero temperatures. In the in-store Wallis shop, frock-fanciers went quiet as a tall, bald man protested loudly after being dug in the ribs by an over-enthusiastic hanger-grabber.

"No one has got any right of way," he fumed. "We're all trying to do some shopping."

Actually, most of the men were trying to get out of doing any shopping. Some looked shiftily unerotic in lingerie; others leaned on dress racks like Roman statues or flopped on sofas.

"This is my first experience of the sales in this country for some time," said Kevan Holden from Chester, squatting on a first floor dsiplay stand. "My wife has got some clothes and I have bought a sweater. No, I probably wouldn't have bought it at full price. I'm hoping to be able to head for the exit soon."

Steve Gusselli was having fun, planting a variety of unsuitable hats on his giggling partner Kay Oaks. She took a liking to an over-large melon slice number.

"It's hard to take this seriously," smiled Ms Oaks. "We didn't come to the sales at all last year and only came this year because we spent all day in bed yesterday and thought we ought to do something today. But I do want a hat."

Tatters, the wedding dress boutique with an off-the-shoulder creation down from £688 to £420, was quiet, perhaps because brides don't like walking down the aisle with a sale ticket on their bustles. Elsewhere, there seemed little demand for sequined séparates and one woman was unsure about black party trousers.

"You know, when they make an outsize thing, they can sometimes go a bit overboard," she said, her brow furrowed with concern.

"I think the others were better," said the assistant, a little bluntly. "Do you think so?" asked the customer, peering over her own shoulder. "These are really wide all the way down, aren't they?"

Three floors up, china was shifting nicely, especially the Villeroy and Boch Indian Look Seconds (30 per cent off). "We'll have six of the dinner plates and six of those smaller plates, but not the tea plates because you can only get a biscuit on them," said a customer.

"Yes," said the assistant, "but if you are serving soup those are the plates on which you would offer a bread roll."

The customer took the point and the small plates. "Do we need a milk and sugar? We ought to really. But not a teapot." She was assured that the design would remain available until 2005.

Bargains were also to be found in Bramhall, the posh suburb to the south of the city where Julie Holloway pounced on three red velvet balls for the price of two in one shop and 20 Christmas cards for 49p (down from 99p) in Woolworth's. "You have to sort them, but they are quite a good bargain," she added.

Bramhall, by the way, was once described by Mike Harding as the only place in the country where people get out of the bath to pee.

Back in Manchester, one earnest paterfamilias skidded into the fray with a warning: "I don't care where we go so long as we get back in time for Wallace and Gromit."

Review

Sex, Fleiss, and a videotape

Jonathan Romney

Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam
BBC2

HOT on the trail of Los Angeles madam Heidi Fleiss, documentarist Nick Broomfield asked on every street corner, but no one was talking. "Not files," he said, "Fleiss." "What are you on about?" asked a weary woman in a hotel bedroom. What did he expect?

As every LA working girl learned this year, if you're standing on Sunset Boulevard and a posh-sounding Englishman pulls up in his car, you either keep your mouth shut or ask to see his money first.

The British tabloid journalists who went to LA this year to quiz pimps and hookers about Divine Brown came back deeply impressed by the deviousness they encountered. Broomfield could have told them a thing or two. His interviewees were true professionals. He simply had to wave his wallet and they would produce stacks of telephone conversations, taped for his delectation.

The Heidi Fleiss scandal might be a ripe tale of Hollywood corruption — a saga of compromised studio executives, embittered rival madams and bent cops. Or it might just be a tawdry piece of low-life tittle-tattle.

Broomfield was interested in the more intimate sleaze — the war of attrition and innuendo between Fleiss and her surrogate parents. One was Madam Alex, the deposed vice queen of LA, now a balding gnome in a grubby peignoir. The other was Heidi's former lover Ivan Nagy, a disarmingly jolly man who once directed Starsky and Hutch. He showed Broomfield a video of himself and Heidi, saying it portrayed "very nice emotional interaction between two people". "Let me see your tits," Nagy pleaded from behind the camera; Heidi struggled into her pullover and giggled.

Judging from the TV reports, there was much more to the story than Broomfield was able to give us; he seemed to have been sidetracked by his conviction that he was looking at "the ultimate in a perverse relationship". We had to decide for ourselves what the story was about: underworld skullduggery or a foolish spat between three neurotics. Alex and Nagy were so compellingly bizarre that Fleiss came across as a gormless bit player.

Everyone wanted Broomfield to think they were outsmarting him; they kept feeding him ever flimsier, ever more embarrassing evidence. But we could never be sure what we were seeing. Had these people invented themselves piecemeal, as they tend to in Hollywood, or was Broomfield's wilfully confused narrative simply inventing them before our eyes?

The film was ultimately about the way LA stories lend themselves to latter-day Raymond Chandler pastiche. Broomfield kept pitching hard-boiled rhetorical comments at us — "I wanted to know more", "I wondered who Heidi Fleiss really was". By the end, you just wanted to say: "Forget it Nick, it's Tinseltown."

Safety check ordered on 50-year-old atomic dump

Paul Brown

A NUCLEAR dump in Cumbria, used during Britain's scramble to build an atomic bomb 50 years ago, is being investigated on the instructions of a government committee responsible for public safety.

A search is under way to find the records of what was tipped into trenches on the site, in order to decide whether the contents should be dug up and disposed of more safely. The dump is believed to be the source of tritium emerging on the beaches from a fresh water spring just outside the perimeter fence of the British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) works at Sellafield.

'More strategy has come from Forte in the past 10 days than in the past 10 years'

— Granada's Gerry Robinson on the change of pace inspired by a takeover guru

Whitbread chief executive Peter Jarvis, left, and Sir Rocco Forte after the sale, which includes the Travelodge operations PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX MACNAUGHTON

Sir Rocco's nifty footwork

Lisa Buckingham

FOR an executive caught shooting on the grouse moors when Granada's £3.4 billion hostile takeover bid landed, Sir Rocco Forte has managed some nimble footwork to defend the hotels and restaurants group built up from a chain of ice-cream parlours established by his father, Lord Forte.

A crucial first step was to draft in the formidable talents of Wall Street takeover strategist, J P Morgan's Roberto Mendoza. Although his appointment was dismissed as a coincidence by Forte, within days one of the most dramatic defence plans of recent years was unveiled. Sir Rocco would split the group into two operations, selling its 68 per cent shareholding in the Savoy hotel.

Mr Mendoza's influence was thought to be behind the barbed comment from Sir Rocco's adversary, Granada's Gerry Robinson, that more strategy had come from Forte in the previous 10 days than in the previous 10 years.

The sale of the stake in the £300 million Savoy hotels group, which includes Claridges, the Connaught and Berkeley, was crucial to winning the support of investors and fund managers, many of whom had grown weary of Forte's 14 year battle to control the top hotels group.

By showing willing to slay sacred cows, Sir Rocco began to be taken more seriously. His following had been tested by lacklustre financial results from the Forte group, and stagnant dividend payments.

Forte maintained the demerger plan was not linked to Granada's assault. It accompanied the strategy with a series of disposals which had been set up before Granada took an interest, adding credibility to the argument that Forte was attempting to make its business more focussed.

First Lillywhites sports store was sold for £28.5 million — more than double its net assets — and a figure which Sir Rocco used to argue that he could realise a better price from selling Forte's assets than Granada's Mr Robinson could.

The company sold another hotel in Liège and a Majorcan apartment block for just over £2 million shortly after it had sold its Griersons wine and spirits distribution business for £29.5 million.

Granada was already sufficiently ruffled to ask the Takeover Panel to make sure Forte could not try to sell any of its top-notch assets such as the Grosvenor House in London without seeking shareholder approval.

But just a week later, Forte sold its Travelodge chain of budget hotels in the US for almost £115 million — a deal which had been under negotiation before the bid.

As a backdrop, Sir Rocco and his advisers were attempting to hint that some of the most frequent complaints from big City shareholders would be addressed. Fund managers have been offended at his "high handed attitude" towards discussing strategy with them, and are concerned the group's boardroom remains family dominated: Sir Rocco's sister, Olga Polizzi, is a director. A number of shareholders have also argued that Sir Rocco should not be both chairman and chief executive.

However, yesterday's conditional sale of the Little Chef and Happy Eater business plus the Travelodge operations is regarded by the Forte camp as a *coup de grâce*. The £1.05 billion deal, with a probable £3.1 billion valuation on the rest of its hotels, to be announced next week, makes the group worth a putative £4.15 billion — about £800 million higher than Granada has offered.

A problem for Sir Rocco's reputation as a canny seller is that a number of the operations sold by Forte recently, such as the Harvester chain, appear to be performing better under their new owners.

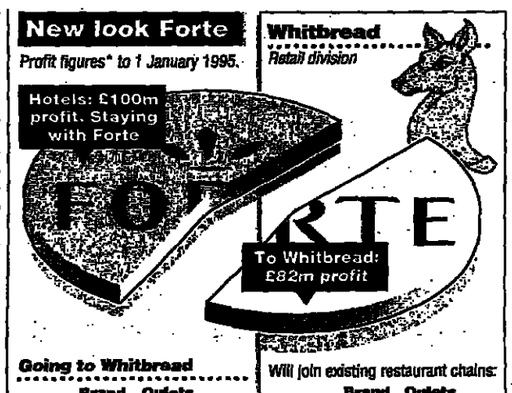
Whitbread is renowned for its refusal to over-pay for businesses and company executives clearly think they can do better with the operations than Forte has. When Forte announced its demerger plans, some City analysts said the roadside restaurants and motorway service areas were worth up to £930 million alone before the hotels were included.

But Sir Rocco said that Whitbread's willingness to pay £1.05 billion for a business with net assets of £800 million was "consistent with Forte's history of achieving superior prices on disposals".

Mr Robinson has just under a fortnight to decide whether Granada should increase substantially the price it is prepared to pay for Forte or whether to continue to woo shareholders with no extra money on the table.

New look Forte

Profit figures to 1 January 1995.*



Whitbread
Retail division

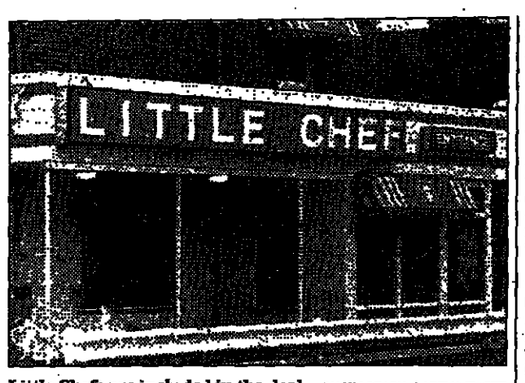
Going to Whitbread

Brand	Outlets
Little Chef	430 (includes 68 Happy Eaters)
Travelodge	127
Welcome Break	26
Cote France	55

**After interest payments*

Will join existing restaurant chains:

Brand	Outlets
Travel Inn	98
Beefeater	270
Brewers Fayre	266
Pizza Hut	339
Costa Coffee	41
TGI Friday's	18



Little Chefs are included in the deal PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Father pleads to missing girl as police fear worst

Owen Bowcott

THE father of Celine Figard yesterday pleaded for her return as the policeman leading the hunt for the 19-year-old French student warned the family to be "prepared for the worst".

Appearing subdued and tense, Bernard Figard told a press conference his daughter was a "timid but happy" person, with no reason to run away. Addressing her through the cameras, he said: "Celine, if you can hear us, if you can see us, please show yourself. All your family and friends are waiting for you."

The 44-year-old farmer from Franche Comte has spent the past two days in Southampton with police officers directing the investigation.

Mr Figard's measured comments were translated by a cousin, Sandrine Journet. He said that Celine had crossed the Channel in a friend's lorry and was making for Fordingbridge, Hampshire, where she was to spend Christmas with a cousin.

"I had no worries about her coming to this country," he said. "She had been here for two months this summer and was very satisfied with her stay. One is never sure of anything, but our family have reflected and no one can find a reason for her to run away."

Mr Figard, a slight figure, presented a controlled face to the cameras but his voice betrayed the strain. "Dear lorry drivers," he implored, "if you have any information regarding the person [with whom Ms Figard was last seen] please keep calling."

Bernard Figard: 'I had no worries about her coming here'

After Mr Figard had left, the officer leading the inquiry, Det Supt Des Thomas, warned that he did not expect a successful outcome. "We are now treating it as if it were a murder inquiry. It's very unusual to find a girl who has disappeared off the face of the earth some eight days later alive and well," he said. Everyone should be "prepared for the worst".

Ms Figard was last seen at the Granada service station at Chieveley, Berkshire, at 4.30pm on the Tuesday before Christmas. While more than 60 uniformed officers, backed by helicopters, searched the countryside between Newbury and Salisbury yesterday, attention was focused on the lorry driver seen giving her a lift.

"I have no doubt at all we will find this lorry driver. My great concern is we will not find him in time to recover Celine," Mr Thomas said.

The driver is described as well-built and ginger-haired, with a distinctive chinstrap beard but no moustache. He drove a white Mercedes truck with a grey box trailer.

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Cheltenham Queen's Hotel	£149
Forest of Dean The Speech House	£130
Marlow The Compleat Angler	£190
Oxford Forte Grand Randolph	£227
Stow-on-the-Wold The Unicorn	£130
Windsor The Castle Hotel	£154
Woodstock The Bear Hotel	£180

and HERE

The Lake District and The North of England

Hull Forte Posthouse	£99
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Forte Crest	£108
Preston Forte Posthouse	£99
Teesside Forte Posthouse	£99
Ullswater Leeming House Hotel	£190
Windermere The Old England	£154
York Forte Posthouse	£117

Scotland

Edinburgh Forte Grand Balmoral †	£227
Glasgow Forte Crest	£120
North Berwick The Marine	£178
St Andrews Rusacks Hotel	£144

and HERE

The Midlands and East Anglia

Brandon/Warwickshire The Brandon Hall	£96
Derby/Barton Forte Posthouse	£99
Dovedale/Ashbourne Peveril of the Peak	£108
Epping Forte Posthouse	£105
Hereford The Green Dragon	£113
Hertlingfordbury The White Horse Hotel	£106
Lavenham The Swan	£154
Leicester Forte Posthouse	£99
Lincoln The White Hart	£154
Long Melford The Bull	£125
Nottingham/Derby Forte Posthouse	£99
Oundle The Talbot	£106
Ross-on-Wye The Royal	£118
Rothley/Leicestershire Rothley Ct. Hotel	£130
Southwell The Saracen's Head	£94
Stanwanger Forte Posthouse	£99
Stratford-upon-Avon The Alveston Manor	£178
Stratford-upon-Avon The Shakespeare	£190
Thetford The Bell	£101

and HERE

The South of England

Alfriston The Star Inn	£137
Alveston Forte Posthouse	£99
Basingstoke Forte Posthouse	£99
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Cranborley Frimley Hall	£125
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Al-Fayed bitter after failed bids to buy newspaper

Harrods boss sets up new tabloid

Lisa Buckingham

MOHAMED Al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods, plans to set up his own newspaper after being thwarted in attempts to break into media ownership.

It is understood that Mr Al-Fayed has a team of journalists working on a new tabloid paper which is expected to be edited by Alan Frame, a former senior journalist on the Daily Express.

Mr Al-Fayed is thought to be considering either a national daily title or an evening newspaper to rival the London Evening Standard, which is owned by Associated Newspapers. He will use his personal fortune to bankroll the venture if it proceeds.

Mr Al-Fayed is not expected to decide on the viability of the project until March but dummy copies are being produced which can be taken to advertisers to test interest.

Mr Al-Fayed's offers — the first during the summer and the second in mid-November — to buy Today from Rupert Murdoch's News International were both rebuffed and the title closed.

Mr Al-Fayed then wrote an open letter to Mr Murdoch protesting that the first refusal had been based on News International's determination to keep the troubled newspaper alive. He added: "It is incredible that you had it within your power to safeguard the jobs of the people whose families depend upon those jobs and you have chosen not to."

Mr Al-Fayed, who also owns the Ritz hotel in Paris, has made no secret of his frustration that he has so far failed to break into the British media scene.

Most recently the Harrods tycoon was linked with a consortium, including Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and the Heinz beans magnate Tony O'Reilly, which had expressed interest in buying the stable of national newspapers owned by United News and Media which includes the Daily Express, Sunday Express and Star.

Lord Stevens, the chairman of United, has made it clear, however, that he is not interested in selling the stable, whose declining flagship title has recently been bolstered by the appointment of new editors and significant changes to the journalistic staff.

The Harrods chairman became increasingly convinced of an "establishment conspiracy" to thwart him which he regarded as most apparent in last year's decision to deny him British citizenship after his revelations about two Conservative MPs who took cash for asking questions in the House of Commons.

Last month, Mr Al-Fayed accused the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, of blocking his plans to buy the London radio station LBC from Reuters. Purchase and regeneration would have cost £4 million. Negotiations ended abruptly after the proposals were put to the Radio Authority.

Neither Mr Al-Fayed nor any of his close aides could be contacted yesterday. But sources close to those involved in the embryonic newspaper say his decision to found a title results from his outrage at perceived exclusion. He regards this as unjustified given that he has lived in Britain for 30 years, runs London's most famous store which employs more than 5,000 people and has considerable charitable commitments.

Easy come, easier go for would-be barons

John Mullin on the successes, failures and compromises since Today pointed the way for press ownership

THEY were begun in pursuit of profit, glory and even, sometimes, journalistic excellence. A heady mixture, and pretty much beyond the past decade's start-up newspaper ventures.

Eddy Shah sparked an industry revolution a decade ago with Today. Founding a newspaper was meant to be cheaper and easier with new technology and disenfranchised unions. Newspapers could manage with smaller circulations.

Except it never worked out that way. Today died last month. The London Daily News, the News on Sunday, the Post and the Correspondent all came and went.

The European remains. And the Independent has survived, far removed from its early idealism and success.

Today

Its founder was Eddy Shah, who published the Messenger group of weekly newspapers in Stockport, and who vanquished the closed shop in 1983. He was backed by Norris McWhirter, founder of the Freedom Association.

Today was to be an independent, middle market paper. The start-up funds were £18 million, and the desired circulation 800,000.

Britain's first newspaper with colour photographs never recovered from a disastrous launch in March 1986. Within four months Shah sold out to Lonrho for £20 million. Tiny Rowland's firm doubled its money when it sold out to News International in June 1987. Its new owners poured in millions but circulation never rose much above 550,000, and the last issue rolled off the presses on November 17 1995.

The Independent

Andreas Whittam Smith, frustrated when passed over for the top job in the city department at the Daily Telegraph, decided to launch a broadsheet. Its most important principle was enshrined in its title. Two Telegraph chums, Matthew Symonds and Stephen Glover, made up the founding triumverate.

It was a roaring success when it launched in October 1986, capitalising on a buoyant advertising market. There was also a supply of former News International journalists who spurned Wapping.

Newspaper Publishing's ambition proved overvaulting when it launched the Independent on Sunday in January 1990, but it did kill off the Correspondent.

Recession hit readership and advertising hard. Spanish and Italian backers were brought in and the company relaxed its rule that no shareholding exceed 15 per cent. Mirror Group Newspapers and Tony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers of Ireland hold the reins now. Cost-cutting has plunged staff morale to an all-time low.

Launch editions of four to enter the ring in the eighties

The London Daily News

Robert Maxwell's London Daily News was to have been the first 24-hour newspaper in Britain. It lasted a little longer: four months.

It began in February 1987, and ran for 126 issues as Lord Rothermere's Associated Newspapers made a fierce defence of its Evening Standard.

The LDN closed with sales at 94,000. Maxwell was thought to have spent £50 million on it.

The News on Sunday

Another 1987 disaster. The plan was for a tabloid, serious yet entertaining. Keith Sutton, the first editor, collided with its conscience, John Pilger, from the start.

Sutton's vision was for a "leftwing Sun" and the ad agency came up with the slogan: "No tits but a lot of balls." A mandatory chapel meeting was held until management dropped the slogan.

The unions were the biggest contributors to the £6.5 million founding capital. Owen Oyston, a then relatively unknown estate agent from Blackpool, had put in £100,000. He soon seized the reins, and guaranteed its weekly £150,000 losses.

Sales of 650,000 were claimed in the first fortnight. They closed at 112,000.

The Post

Shah's second foray into national newspapers was abandoned after 33 issues in December 1988. It was published at the Messenger headquarters in Warrington, and had a break-even circulation of 370,000. It achieved 100,000, and lost maybe £6 million.

The Correspondent

An innovative paper, but even financial help from Maxwell could not keep it afloat. It died in November 1990 after 14 months, killed by Newspaper Publishing's launch of the Independent on Sunday.

It was losing £250,000 a week as circulation dipped to 200,000, against a break-even figure of 400,000. In a last fling it relaunched as a tabloid under John Bryant. He joked that he was a rat joining a sinking ship.

Backers included the Chicago Tribune, the Guardian and Arab groups. Initial finance was around £18 million, but within four months another package for £10 million had to be arranged.

The European

On its launch in May 1990, founder Maxwell was unable to give copies away. On his death the Barclay brothers stepped in and sales are now said to be 225,000, its founder's target.

The Rev Toddy Hoare with his depiction of the Disciple Matthew

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE WISEMAN

Vicar's art lays Bible bare

Martin Wainwright

NAKED come we into this life, naked we leave it, and — if we live in eight rural parishes around the Yorkshire town of Thirsk — naked we may appear in the vicar's spare-time modern artworks.

Local worthies in the rich agricultural district, made famous by the vet and writer James Herriot, have been used by Rev Toddy Hoare for a set of panels showing Jesus's disciples going about their business with nothing on.

"Some vicars write commentaries on the Bible but I've made a commentary in concrete," said Rev Hoare, aged 47, who spent a three-month sabbatical dipping his hands in sand and cement. "There are too few 20th century statements of theology in churches today, apart from abstract stained glass. People go into a church and may believe that spirituality belonged only to our forefathers."

The vicar, who worked as an army padre after losing his savings as a sculptor, hopes to hang the 6ft by 3ft panels in the 17th century church of St Michael and All Angels, Cowesby, a hamlet of 48 residents which is one of eight parishes under his supervision.

He said that people had "sparked a bit" after seeing the 12 figures but most comments had been favourable.

However, the display plan, and hopes of a sponsor to pay for a bronze casting, may prove an uphill struggle in a conservative-minded area. Gill Mayne of Felixkirk, another of the parishes, said: "What these represent is beyond me. I don't think there is any necessity for exploiting nudity and especially full frontals . . . They certainly wouldn't be hanging in my church."

The panels include a seated Matthew — based on an art school lecturer — and a figure of James hoeing a crop in the nude.

The nudity, partly modelled from life, was the result of careful thought.

"Contemporary dress would have tied the figures down in the wrong context as much as ancient clothes," he said. "No amount of dressing-up can cover the fact that God sees us as we are."

Paris denies trade-off with Serbs over pilots

Continued from page 1

taken to Pale to meet Gen Mladic, who, according to the pilots, was responsible for their future treatment. He warned them that they would be treated as criminals, accusing them of attacking civilian targets. Before they were given medical treatment, the men were made to tour hospitals to see civilian casualties and then taken to another hospital where Gen Mladic said they would be tortured before execution.

After doctors operated on the men's broken legs, they shared a room for three weeks. But for the subsequent six weeks they were held in solitary confinement and given food only about once every three days. There was no heating and they were given only pyjamas to wear.

According to the leaked briefing, Capt Chiffot and Lt Sauvignet were forced to undergo several mock executions and, during beatings, were repeatedly kicked on their injured legs.

Soon after the Dayton peace agreement, the crewmen were reunited and given better treatment but did not know they were going to be released until they were given back their uniforms. Gen Mladic, who had earlier told the French government he had no idea if the men were alive or dead, oversaw the handover to French military leaders at Zvornik on December 12.

The men then had to undergo the humiliation of be photographed shaking the general's hand. When they returned to Paris in a VIP jet, President Jacques Chirac denied that a deal had been made with the Bosnian Serb leadership.

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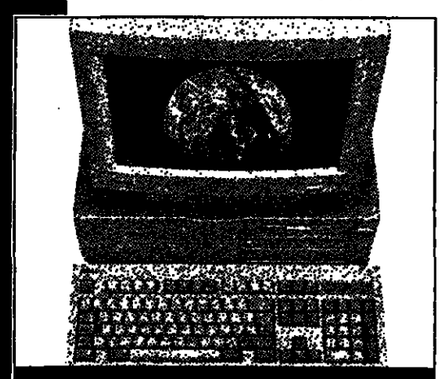

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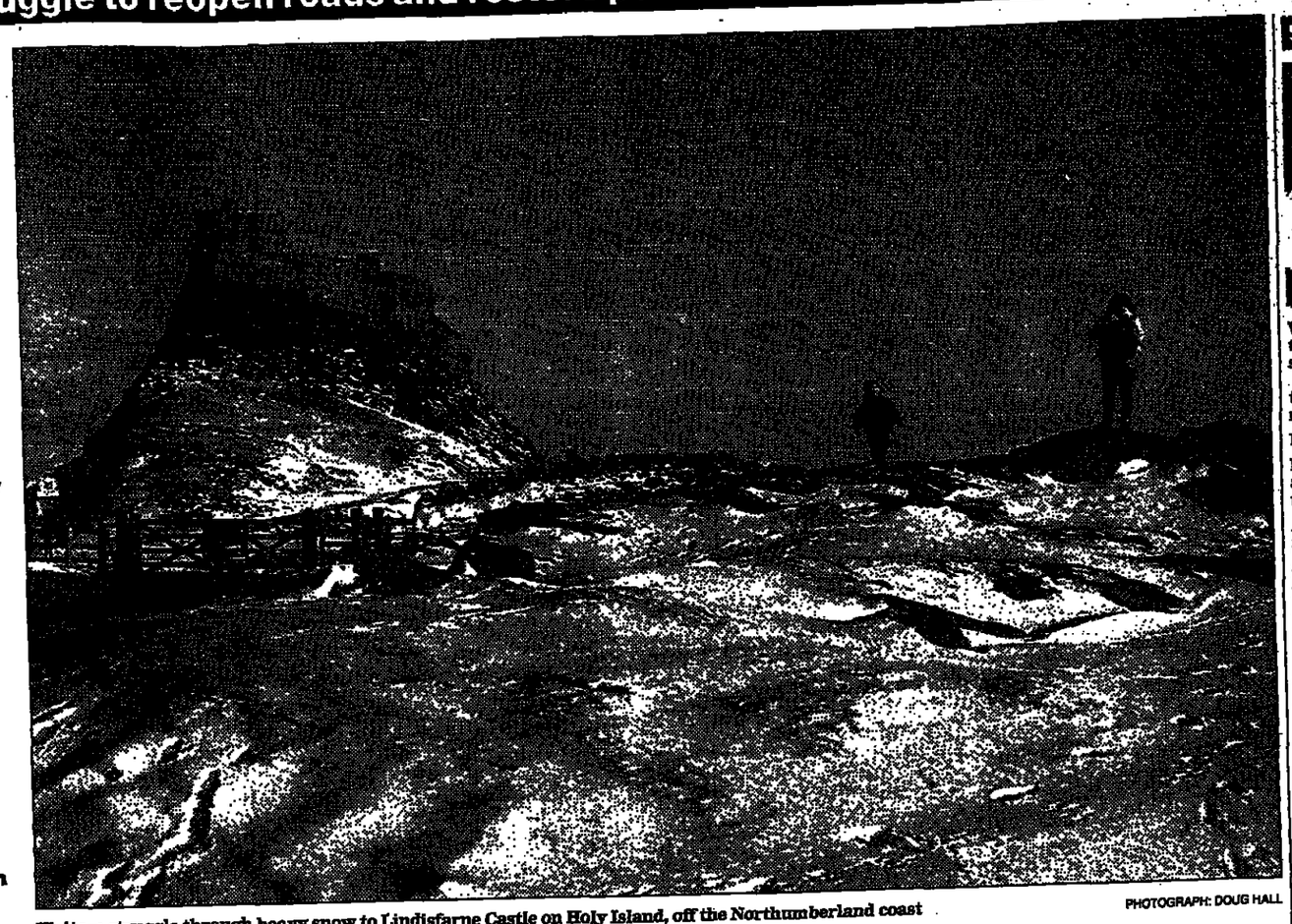
Worst apology of the year: Jerry Wiggin, the Tory MP who tabled amendments to a bill in another MP's name. He said his actions had been "at odds with the proper expectations of the House", which is like saying, after you have drunk all the brandy, peed in the fireplace and made a pass at his wife, that your behaviour had been "at odds with the proper expectations of my host."

Simon Hoggart's parliamentary awards page 11

Workmen struggle to reopen roads and restore power to Scottish island communities still cut off by blizzards

MP calls for cold weather relief to be doubled as snow and ice tighten grip

Vivek Chaudhary and **Erlend Clouston**



Visitors struggle through heavy snow to Lindisfarne Castle on Holy Island, off the Northumberland coast PHOTOGRAPH: DOUG HALL

THE Government was urged yesterday to review cold weather payments as temperatures fell to -18C in parts of Scotland and the cold showed no sign of easing in other parts.

Labour MP George Foulkes called for a "double premium" to be paid when temperatures fell below -10C for 24 hours.

The Government said yesterday that the £8.50 per week payment to help those on income support cope with heating bills during cold snaps, would be made right across the country.

The Department of Social Security said last night that the payments had so far been triggered in virtually the whole of Scotland, Tyneside, Teesside, Carlisle, Manchester, Birmingham, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and Wiltshire.

Under existing legislation only three groups are eligible for cold weather payments; families with children under five, the disabled and long-term sick, and pensioners.

Michael King, chairman of the National Right to Fuel Campaign, said: "This payment does not go to all vulnerable people because not everyone on income support receives it."

Cold weather payments depend on local weather conditions. Details of the weather are fed to the Department of Social Security by a network of 55 weather stations. The payments are triggered when temperatures fall, or are predicted to fall, to freezing or below for a seven-day period.

In the Shetlands, hundreds of islanders remained without powerlast night as emergency services fought to restore electricitycut off by the ferocious weather on Christmas Eve. If conditions deteriorate, the military will be used to secure supply lines to remoter settlements.

Despite a break in the weather that allowed exhausted road crews to hold open one lane of the main south-north link between Sumburgh and Lerwick, the west side of the mainland was still smothered by extensive snow drifts.

Scores of households in the island villages of Walls and Sandness were forced for the fourth day running to rely on peat and coal fires to stave off sub-zero temperatures, though Hydro-Electric was hopeful that all its Shetland customers would have power restored by nightfall.

They were more fortunate than the dozen residents of Hushinish on Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The collapse of 33 electricity poles under the weight of iced-up cables has meant they must wait until today to be reconnected — five days after they first lost power in storms that at one stage plunged 20,000 homes into darkness.

The administration of the beleaguered Shetland archipelago is temporarily in the hands of chief executive Malcolm Green. Following the activation of the council's emergency plan on Boxing Day, decisions on the deployment of local resources are taken by him after twice-daily meetings with representatives of the police, coastguards, hospitals and social services.

● Oliver Stephen Docx, aged 15, of Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, and his four-year-old sister, Alexandra Mary, died after a lorry smashed into a stationary car on the snow-hit A19 near Easington, County Durham, yesterday. Their sister, Hannah Mary, aged 10, is being treated for a fractured skull. Their parents, three other children and the lorry driver, were taken to Hartlepool hospital with minor injuries and shock.

● John Colquhoun, aged 16, froze to death while trying to walk three miles to his home at Mauchline in Strathclyde after a car accident on Christmas Day, police said.

Scotland

Weather
Heavy snow, sub-zero temperatures everywhere; overnight Glasgow -19C.

Forecast
More of the same

Driving conditions
Extremely treacherous.

WEATHER: Further heavy snowfalls over the north of the Highlands and northern and western islands; lighter showers down the east coast as far as Aberdeen.

Elsewhere dry and bright, but with sub-zero temperatures everywhere; overnight on Tuesday Glasgow airport recorded a record-breaking -19C, Aviemore -18C.

FORECAST: more of the same.

DRIVING CONDITIONS: Extremely treacherous, through a combination of snow, ice, and pockets of freezing fog up the Ayrshire coast and along the Forth/Clyde valley.

All main roads closed in the Shetland Islands; in Grampian the A939 (Ballater to Tomintoul), the A941 (Dufftown to Rhynie) and the B974 (Banchory to Fettercairn) are blocked; in Central the A821 Aberfoyle to Callander link is impassable because of ice. Fog yesterday reduced visibility on Glasgow's Erskine Bridge to 50 metres.

Northern England

Weather
Cold weather all over the region, with some areas reaching -12C.

Forecast
Snow in West turning to rain by Saturday. Damn cold – below freezing.

Driving conditions
Black ice main problem in East.

WEATHER: Cold all over the region, with some areas reaching -12C. Intense cold in parts of Yorkshire and North-east. Areas of the Lake District particularly cold, with several passes closed by snow and frost.

FORECAST: Set to remain cold until the weekend. Some snow in North-west turning to rain by Saturday. Temperatures expected to remain well below freezing. Most of inland Yorkshire likely to remain clear but cold. Snow falls expected along eastern coast from the Tyne to the Humber.

DRIVING: Black ice main problem in North-east. Snowploughs cleared blocked roads but problems expected with frost. Dangerous driving conditions widespread across the region. RAC advised motorists to avoid minor roads east of Alston. Roads around Merseyside likely to remain trecherous over next few days. Delays also expected at major airports and railway stations.

Central England

Weather
Temperatures below freezing over most of the region. Snow in rural areas.

Forecast
Morning freezing fog and ice. Temperatures close to freezing.

Driving conditions
Dangerous driving conditions in eastern parts of the Midlands, and Lincolnshire.

WEATHER: Temperatures below freezing over most of the region likely to fall to -7C during the night in some areas. Snow in rural areas, particularly in eastern Midlands.

FORECAST: Freezing fog and ice expected in the mornings but temperatures not expected to rise much above freezing. Possible snow showers towards the end of the week which could turn to rain by the weekend. No heavy snow falls predicted. Warmer air could sweep across parts of the area by tomorrow. Parts of Lincolnshire could be particularly affected by fog and ice.

DRIVING: Motorways expected to be severly clogged with shoppers. Parts of the M6 could be severely congested, particularly southbound. A1 in Lincolnshire severely affected by freezing fog and snow. Dangerous driving conditions in eastern parts of the Midlands.

N Ireland, Wales and the West

Weather
Temperatures dropped as low as -13C.

Forecast
Expected to remain very cold with freezing fog in N Ireland.

Driving conditions
Icy patches on roads.
Bad conditions in N Wales.

WEATHER: Temperatures dropped as low as -13C in Northern Ireland last night, and barely rose above freezing in South Wales and the West of England. But the regions were mainly dry with a few isolated flurries of sleet and snow.

FORECAST: Expected to remain very cold following an extensive frost overnight. Today should be dry with *sunny intervals and temperatures around zero for South Wales*, but south-western counties of England are likely to see scattered sleet, snow and rain showers.

DRIVING CONDITIONS: Icy patches on minor roads, including sheet ice in the Dartmouth area of south Devon, caused problems, and resulted in the closure of Leckwith Hill on the outskirts of Cardiff. An accident near the Glastonbury turn-off caused long tailbacks on the M5. But police and motoring organisations reported no major incidents.

London, South-east and East Anglia

Weather
Snow north of London; 8cm of snow around Stansted airport area.

Forecast
Set to remain cold. Snow towards end of week possibly in East Anglia.

Driving conditions
Warnings of fog and ice on smaller country roads in East Anglia

WEATHER: Temperatures likely to remain at around freezing. Some snow to the north of London; 6cm of snow around Stansted airport. Brighter in southern areas with light easterly winds. Colder to the east.

FORECAST: Set to remain cold. Temperatures not expected to rise above 3C, but could fall to as low as -7C in some areas. Lowest temperatures will be to the north of the Thames and northern Home Counties. Warnings of snow towards the end of today and early tomorrow, possibly in East Anglia.

DRIVING CONDITIONS: Warnings of severe congestion at major shopping areas. M25 motorway severely congested. Warnings of fog and ice on smaller country roads in East Anglia. A13 is closed in east London along with Rotherhithe tunnel for repairs. Will reopen in the new year.

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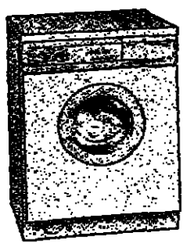

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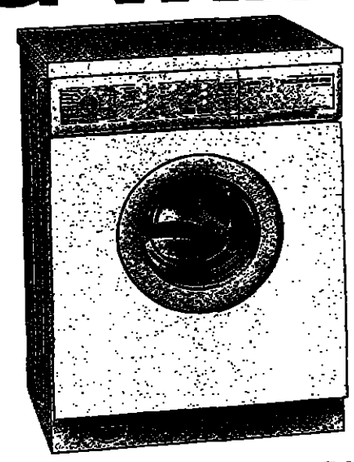

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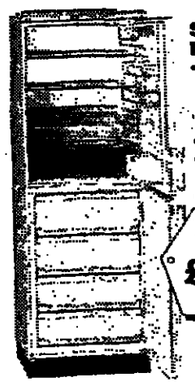

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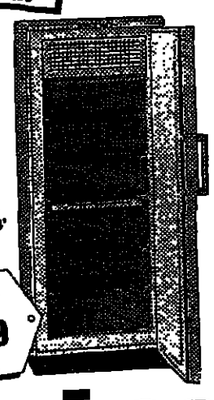

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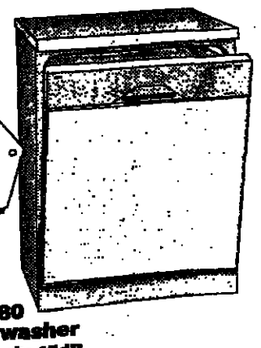

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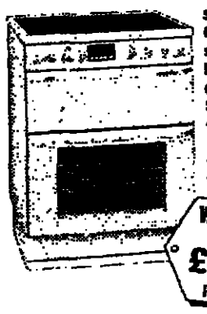

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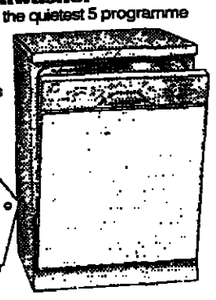

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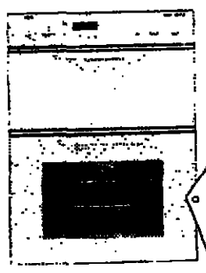

GAS HOB EXTRA WIDE 5-RING 32253 G9
WINTER SALE PRICE £239.99 RRP £259.99

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Full multifunction double oven
COMPETENCE 52380B Build-in double oven
- Multifunction double oven • Cool-touch/Energy saver oven doors • Full width glass doors and control panel
- Shielded control dials for easy cleaning
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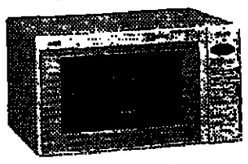

WINTER SALE PRICE £159.99 RRP £169.99

MICROMAT 21T Microwave Oven
- 8 weight and 5 auto reheat programmes
- 850W power output. 9 settings • 3 stage programmable • 21 litres (0.75 cu ft) capacity

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Safety net . . . Workers from the National Rivers Authority removing thousands of fish, among them a pike, from Grimsbury reservoir, Oxfordshire, which is to be emptied for restoration work on the concrete banks

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MANSELL

Classroom crisis looms as the recession eases

New Zealand calls its teachers home

Donald MacLeod
Education Correspondent

NEW Zealand has begun an advertising campaign in Britain to woo back hundreds of expatriate teachers staffing British classrooms.

Up to 1,000 New Zealanders are estimated to be in British schools — particularly in London — as a way of financing travel to Europe on their "OE" — overseas experience.

Now the Wellington government, which has enjoyed a healthy surplus of teachers for years, is calling them home to fulfil its promise to reduce class sizes. Advertising in London and Strathclyde has been aimed at New Zealanders, although British teachers are also being recruited.

Rising numbers of primary schoolchildren and the New Zealand government's target limit of 25 to a class mean an extra 1,000 teachers will be needed next year.

With Britain's Teacher Training Agency expressing concern about recruitment, London schools are bracing themselves for a re-run of the shortage in the late 1980s as the easing of the recession opens up alternative jobs, particularly to maths and science graduates.

During the last shortage, the British authorities targeted qualified New Zealanders and Australians, who were often working in bars or on building sites in the capital, and even advertised at the Munich beer festival.

Timeplan, an agency which supplies teachers to London schools, said there was already a shortage in key subjects and it expected the position to get worse next year when the primary school roll rose again.

"I believe it will be a crisis," said Ian Penman, of Timeplan, which will be visiting 40 universities and colleges to recruit newly qualified teachers.

The agency has about 150 New Zealanders on its books. "They are immensely popular teachers," he said.

Mr Penman said the murder of Philip Lawrence, the London headteacher, while trying to save a pupil, had added to the "poisonous drip feed" of bad publicity about London schools which made it more difficult to recruit.

Yesterday headteachers called on the School Teachers' Review Body to make a pay award that would avert a recruitment crisis.

"Projected pay rises in general, and the CBI's recent statement on pay awards in particular, show yet again that teachers are falling behind in terms of pay," David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said in a letter to the chairman of the review body, John Gardiner.

Mr Hart said the Teacher Training Agency was warning about a shortage of 30,000 teachers by the end of the decade. The agency denied putting a figure on the problem.

Mr Hart said: "A crisis can only be averted if the pay review body awards teachers a pay settlement for 1996 which enables schools to recruit the right number of graduates and to retain existing staff, too many of whom take early retirement."

Better mental care pledged

Angella Johnson

THE mentally ill are to be given a special patient's charter to help quell growing public concern about schizophrenics involved in vicious assaults.

The Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, is set to announce new guidelines designed to improve the standard of care for psychiatric patients, and make the streets safer.

But the move was yesterday labelled "little more than window dressing" by the mental health charity MIND. It said that there was no evidence of an increased risk of violence to the public from schizophrenics since the introduction of care in the community.

"Despite a number of tragic and very high profile attacks, public fears are exaggerated. The real problem is a dearth of services for the metally ill and this charter does not address the fact that money is what is needed.

"Anything else is just window dressing and more paper pushing by a government which appears to be playing to public fears while skirting the issue of under-funding."

Mr Dorrell insisted the charter, to be unveiled in the new year, would lead to improved standards of care by setting out "what the patient is entitled to expect under the existing law".

These included help from nurses or social workers, if they needed it, after discharge, and home visits within four hours for urgent cases and within two working days for non-urgent cases.

Patients would not be sent home if it was thought there could be the slightest risk to carers, relatives or the public, and there would be new time limits for assessing a patient's illness.

Concerns about people released into care in the community were heightened in 1992 when Jonathan Zito was killed by Christopher Clunis, a schizophrenic, at a Tube station.

Other incidents, including the recent stabbing of a doctor in his north London surgery, have brought the Government's record on mental illness under scrutiny.

● The homeless charity Crisis said that a shortage of hospital beds was causing an increase in the number of homeless mentally ill people seeking help.

Media regulators 'to keep watch' on EU advertising

Michael White

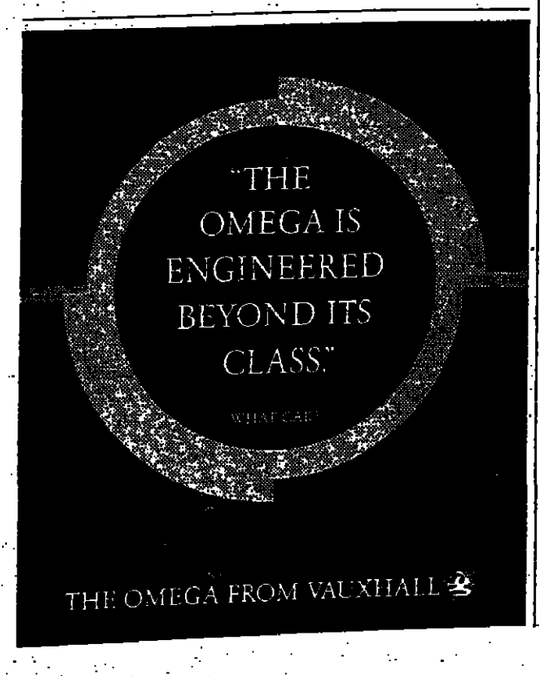
A SENIOR media regulator yesterday confirmed that radio and television authorities will be monitoring "very carefully" the latest attempts by the European Union to advertise its case for a single currency on British broadcast media.

In the wake of yesterday's Guardian report that Labour and Conservative Eurosceptics are concerned that recent EU adverts on commercial radio stations are "pushing at the barriers" of banned political advertising, Geoffrey Draughn, deputy head of the Broadcasting Advertising Clearance Centre, confirmed that anything "seeking to influence government policy would be ruled out".

Since John Major's Cabinet is deliberately fence-sitting on British membership of a single "euro" currency, adverts extolling its merits would, Eurosceptics insist, be aimed precisely at influencing policy. Their fears were not allayed when Angel Carro, a European Commission spokesman in London, suggested on Radio 4's World at One that the commission understood "the line to be drawn between an information campaign and something else which would be seen as propagamda"; the latter would be counter-productive.

Political debate should take place in other forums, Mr Carro suggested. But he went on to offer "lower interest rates which are reflected in lower mortgage rates" as an example of how a single currency would benefit British voters.

It is a claim endorsed by pro-single currency politicians on all sides, but disputed by those who insist no such assumption can safely be made about Britain's very different financial structures — in which fixed term mortgages, unaffected by short term rate changes, are not as common as on mainland Europe.



New Savings Rates from the Bristol & West

EFFECTIVE 28TH DECEMBER 1995 (unless otherwise stated).

†Fixed with effect from 1st January 1996 until 30th June 1996. †† With effect from 5th January 1996.

ACCOUNT	AMOUNT INVESTED	GROSS RATE OF INTEREST PA* (VARIABLE)	NET PA**
SELECT	£50,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£25,000+	2.90%	2.18%
	£10,000+	2.40%	1.80%
	£5,000+	2.10%	1.58%
	£2,000+	1.85%	1.39%
	£500+	0.25%	0.19%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
An instant access account for investors who want a choice of access options (Rates also apply to Bonus Bond Select and Balanced Bond Select. In addition, also applies to the following accounts which are no longer available: High 3o, Special Edition Bond, HiLife, Fixed Rate Bond, Secure Investment Bonds Issues 1 & 2, Treble Rate Bond, Overseas 3 Month Capital Account, Overseas Prime Access account (††), Cheshunt Foreign 90, Cheshunt Instant Access, Cheshunt Foreign Instant, Cheshunt Instant Gross, Cheshunt Charity Instant, Ex Aid to Thrift, Better Option Bond Issues 1 AND 2, Guaranteed Investment Account Issues 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14, No 1 Capital (††), Tiered Rate Bond, First Class Bond, 2 Year Premium Share Account, Vantage Bond, No 1 Gross, Triple Bonus (††), Bristol Plus, Moneylink, Snoopy, Guaranteed Equity Bond 3 Year Issue 1, Guaranteed Equity Bond 3 Year Issue 3, Bonus Interest Bond Issue 1 and Capital Maker Bond (††).			
SPECIAL MONTHLY INCOME (††) For investors who want monthly income and instant access (Rates also apply to High 3o Monthly Income (††), Cheshunt Instant Income (††), Better Option Bond Monthly Income Issues 1 and 2 (††), Overseas Monthly Income (††), No 1 Income (††), Triple Bonus Monthly Income (††) - all no longer available).	£50,000+	3.06%	2.29%
	£25,000+	2.86%	2.15%
	£10,000+	2.37%	1.78%
	£5,000+	2.08%	1.56%
	£2,000+	1.83%	1.38%
	£500+	0.25%	0.19%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
PREMIER SAVER An instant access account for investors who limit their access over a 12 month period (No withdrawals).	£100,000+	5.10%	3.83%
	£50,000+	4.95%	3.71%
	£25,000+	4.80%	3.60%
	£10,000+	4.50%	3.38%
	£5,000+	4.05%	3.04%
	£2,000+	3.70%	2.78%
	£1,000+	3.55%	2.66%
	£500	2.55%	1.91%
(1-6 Withdrawals)	£100,000+	4.10%	3.08%
	£50,000+	3.95%	2.96%
	£25,000+	3.80%	2.85%
	£10,000+	3.50%	2.63%
	£5,000+	3.05%	2.29%
	£2,000+	2.70%	2.03%
	£1,000+	2.55%	1.91%
	£500	1.55%	1.16%
(More than 6 Withdrawals)	£100,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£50,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£25,000+	2.90%	2.18%
	£10,000+	2.40%	1.80%
	£5,000+	2.10%	1.58%
	£2,000+	1.85%	1.39%
	£1,000+	0.25%	0.19%
	£500	0.25%	0.19%
PREMIER PLUS CAPITAL ISSUE 1 Three months notice required for withdrawal (Rates also apply to Guaranteed Investment Account Issue 5 and Guaranteed Investment Account Extra Issue 1).	£100,000+	5.40%	4.05%
	£50,000+	5.30%	3.98%
	£25,000+	5.05%	3.79%
	£10,000+	4.50%	3.38%
	£5,000+	3.60%	2.70%
	£2,000+	3.30%	2.48%
	£500+	3.25%	2.44%
PREMIER PLUS MONTHLY INCOME ISSUE 1 (††) Three months notice required for withdrawal, and interest paid monthly.	£100,000+	5.27%	3.95%
	£50,000+	5.18%	3.88%
	£25,000+	4.94%	3.70%
	£10,000+	4.41%	3.31%
	£5,000+	3.54%	2.66%
	£2,000+	3.25%	2.44%
	£500+	3.20%	2.40%
PREMIER OPTION BOND Variable Rate Option paying interest six monthly. Issues A, B, C, D, E and F.	£100,000+	6.30%	4.73%
	£50,000+	6.05%	4.54%
	£25,000+	5.75%	4.31%
	£5,000+	5.50%	4.13%
PREMIER OPTION BOND (††) Variable Rate Option paying interest monthly. Issues A, B, C, D, E and F.	£100,000+	6.13%	4.59%
	£50,000+	5.89%	4.42%
	£25,000+	5.60%	4.20%
	£5,000+	5.37%	4.02%
PREMIER OPTION BOND (†) Fixed Rate Option paying interest six monthly (Issue B)	£100,000+	6.90%	5.18%
	£50,000+	6.80%	5.10%
	£25,000+	6.75%	5.06%
	£5,000+	6.70%	5.03%
PREMIER OPTION BOND (†) Fixed Rate Option paying interest monthly (Issue B)	£100,000+	6.69%	5.02%
	£50,000+	6.60%	4.95%
	£25,000+	6.55%	4.91%
	£5,000+	6.50%	4.88%

ACCOUNT	AMOUNT INVESTED	GROSS RATE OF INTEREST PA* (VARIABLE)	NET PA**
TESSA PLUS A 5 year savings account with tax free interest and a special bonus interest payment of 2% on the first year's savings on maturity.	£3,000+	6.10%	
	£500+	4.60%	
	£1+	1.00%	
PREMIER TESSA (Available from 01/01/96) A Follow-Up TESSA designed for savers whose original TESSA has matured.	£9,000	6.70%	
	£5,000+	6.40%	
	£3,000+	6.40%	
	£500+	4.60%	
	£1+	0.35%	
PREMIER RESERVE BOND (Available from 01/01/96) A competitive one year bond for Bristol & West Follow-Up TESSA holders only.	£1,000+	6.50%	
	£1+	0.35%	
BONUS TESSA (Not available for new investors from 01/01/96) A 5 year savings account with tax free interest and a guaranteed interest bonus on maturity.	£3,000+	5.05%	
	£500+	3.55%	
	£1+	0.50%	
THE CHILDREN'S ACCOUNT The instant access account for children under 14 years of age.	£1+	2.45%	1.84%
CHARITY ACCOUNT (††) Withdrawals available on instant access.	£1+	3.10%	2.33%
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT (††)	£1+	0.60%	0.45%
SPECIAL DEPOSIT ACCOUNT (††)	£1+	0.60%	0.45%
SAVINGS SHARES (No longer available) Rates also apply to Cheshunt Regular Monthly Savings.	£1+	0.55%	0.41%
SECURE INVESTMENT ACCOUNT ISSUE 3	£2,000+	8.20%	6.15%
SECURE INVESTMENT ACCOUNT ISSUE 4	£2,000+	7.00%	5.25%
FULLY PAID SHARE Interest paid six monthly. Rates also apply to Cheshunt Investment Share, Cheshunt Clubs, Cheshunt Ex Thrift and Cheshunt Subscription Share. (No longer available).	£50,000+	3.06%	2.29%
	£25,000+	2.86%	2.15%
	£10,000+	2.37%	1.78%
	£5,000+	2.08%	1.56%
	£2,000+	1.83%	1.38%
	£500+	0.25%	0.19%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
BONUS INTEREST BOND ISSUES 2, & 3	£25,000+	5.50%	4.13%
	£10,000+	5.15%	3.86%
BONUS RETURN BOND ISSUES 1 & 2 (No longer available) 12 month Bond account with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.	£5,000+	4.70%	3.53%
BONUS BOND (Issue 2) (No longer available) 12 month Bond account with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.	£250,000+	5.95%	4.46%
	£100,000+	5.85%	4.39%
	£50,000+	5.75%	4.31%
	£25,000+	5.50%	4.13%
	£10,000+	5.15%	3.86%
	£5,000+	4.25%	3.19%
BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††) (No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.	£250,000+	5.79%	4.35%
	£100,000+	5.70%	4.27%
	£50,000+	5.60%	4.20%
	£25,000+	5.37%	4.02%
	£10,000+	5.03%	3.77%
	£5,000+	4.17%	3.13%
CHESHUNT SPECIAL 90 (No longer available) Rates also apply to Cheshunt Special 90 Gross and Cheshunt Charity 90.	£50,000+	4.45%	3.34%
	£20,000+	4.15%	3.11%
	£5,000+	3.15%	2.36%
	£500+	2.75%	2.06%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
CHESHUNT SPECIAL 90 INCOME (††) (No longer available)	£50,000+	4.36%	3.27%
	£20,000+	4.07%	3.05%
	£5,000+	3.11%	2.33%
	£500+	2.72%	2.04%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
CHESHUNT TESSA (No longer available) Rates also apply to TESSA General Portfolio Linked and TESSA General Portfolio Funded.	£1+	5.35%	

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The Guardian Thursday December 28 1995

As a new organisation campaigns to win rights for families broken by acts of violence, police investigate a series of deaths of revellers

A fight for justice by bereaved

Helen Nowicka on one woman's anger

CHRISTMAS is a painful time for Ann Virgin. The annual emphasis on family celebrations only serves to underline the absence of Martin Bacon, her partner of 12 years, who died after he was set upon outside a pub.

"This is a difficult few weeks for anyone who has been bereaved but when the person you love was killed it is even more painful," said Ann.

"It's a time when you can't help but think about what's happened. I get fits of anger that someone who has taken a life is walking around able to enjoy their Christmas."

In November, 1992, Martin was leaving a pub in Walthamstow, east London, with friends following a night's drinking. As he was about to get into a car someone shouted "black poof" at a man outside their group.

"That is not something Martin would say. We don't know if it was even anyone he was with. But his head was the nearest when they got their weapons." The self-employed businessman was clubbed over the head with an iron bar, and died two weeks later aged 31 of a brain haemorrhage.

Shortly before the incident his attacker, David Kerry, then 22, had been acquitted of five armed robberies, and had received a conditional discharge for carrying a machete.

He was charged with causing grievous bodily harm as Martin had died some time after the assault.

Kerry was found guilty in November, 1993, and jailed for 10 years but appealed against his sentence and was released 16 months later. His accomplice, Leroy Skeete, on parole for kidnapping and causing actual bodily harm at the time of the attack on Martin, was sentenced to 18 months for affray.

Ann's bitterness over Martin's death was fuelled by the courts' lenient treatment of his assailants. She decided to turn her outrage to a positive purpose and together with Martin's mother, Joan, formed Justice for Victims, a pressure group aimed at winning rights for the families bereaved by murder, and now in contact with relatives of 300 dead men, women and children.

Grieving . . . Ann Virgin, of Justice for Victims, who 'would go mad if I wasn't doing this' PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Justice for Victims campaigns for families to be consulted and their needs to be addressed as a matter of course by the judicial and penal system.

Ann and other founder members meet regularly with coroners, parole boards, and MPs, to suggest how they can make official procedures less intimidating for relatives. The organisation is lobbying for families in murder and manslaughter trials to be given guaranteed seats in the well of the court rather than have to jostle for space in the public gallery with the prospect of sitting next to the family of the accused. Ann, aged 42, also wants to see a more understanding attitude adopted by coroners and the Crown Prosecution Service.

"When we talked to the coroner's staff about burying Martin they called him 'the body' — there was no caring, no compassion, it was terrible. They have to remember they are dealing with grieving people, but one man said to me 'we are sorting this out in our own good time and when we are ready we will tell you'. I was very upset by that."

Justice for Victims scored a major coup in November when, as a result of lobbying the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, the Home Office published an information pack to be distributed to all murder and manslaughter victims' families, explaining how the legal system operates and giving contact details for support organisations.

Ann believes starting Justice for Victims has helped her get through her grief, and feel that the campaign allows some good to come from Martin's death.

"I would go mad if I wasn't doing this. You do see people who have lost it, but then not only has the killer taken away your child or partner, they've destroyed you too. I'm buggered if I'm going to let that happen."

More victims of holiday violence

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

REVELLERS were involved in a series of violent deaths over Christmas despite police appeals for weapons to be handed in during a month-long knife amnesty.

In Newcastle, two men in their 20s were last night helping detectives with their inquiries into the death of a teenager. Lee Marshall, aged 19, was found dying from stab wounds outside a house in Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne, just before midnight on Boxing Day. He died shortly after arrival at the Royal Victoria Infirmary.

Detectives are also investigating what has been described as a gangland murder last Saturday of a man who was shot dead in Macey's Bar in the city centre.

Francis Kelly, a 28-year-old father of two, was shot in the chest with a handgun in front of a crowd of Christmas drinkers. A friend, David Armstrong, aged 23, was wounded in the arm as he tried to save Mr Kelly.

The gunman was able to escape in the crush of bystanders.

Detective Chief Inspector Graham Pears said: "This killing is a result of a dispute between two factions. There is no evidence to suggest this was a random shooting, so the public should not be unduly alarmed."

In Plymouth, police are investigating the Boxing Day murder of a man found with serious head injuries outside a social club. Leonard Tall, aged 28, was taken to Plymouth's Derriford hospital after being attacked outside the Octagon social club, of which he was a member. Mr Tall, described as easy-going, was apparently struck over the head with a paving stone.

Police had been called to the club after receiving reports of a fight between three men.

In London, police have appealed for help to trace two young white men seen driving away in an old-style Ford Fiesta from the spot where a man was stabbed to death early on Christmas morning.

John Trinder, aged 55, a divorced unemployed man who lived alone, died near his home in Peckham, south London. He had been stabbed more than 20 times.

Low security jails to close

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

AT LEAST two low security jails are to close within the next 12 months as part of the 15 per cent budget cut facing the Prison Service.

Among the candidates for closure to be considered by Home Office ministers next month are Blantyre House in Cranbrook, Kent; Kirklevington Grange near Yarm, Cleveland, and North Sea Camp, near Boston in Lincolnshire.

It is expected that closing these prisons would save £7 million a year.

The prisons hold a total of 375 inmates.

The decision to close between two and four is expected to follow a Prison Service Board review of the 130 prisons in England and Wales now under way.

The closures are expected in spite of a record prison population resulting from a sharp rise in the number of violent prisoners.

The jail population reached a record 52,700 earlier this month — an increase of 12,000 over the past three years.

An internal Prison Service strategy report this year concluded that the days of open prisons were numbered because too few inmates could be trusted not to abscond.

The expected closures come as a leaked Prison Service memorandum shows that the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is ready to drop two of the key performance indicators introduced into the Prison Service two years ago when it became an arms-length agency and adopted its first "business plan".

The indicators are designed to prevent prisoners having to double up on cells built for single occupation, and to ensure that inmates spend 12 hours a day out of their cells — a Woolf inquiry recommendation following the 1990 riots at Strangeways and other jails. It is proposed to reduce the target to eight hours a day.

An indicator on the minimum number of visits is also being dropped.

Instead, three new indicators are to be introduced next April covering the proportion of random drug tests that prove positive, the number of prisoners completing anti-offending programmes and the number of days prison staff spend training.

"These proposals are now with ministers and we await their views," says the leaked memorandum.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "The Prison Service's effectiveness drive has been undermined by the obsession of ministers with prison numbers and sounding tough.

"The cuts to budgets have meant it is no longer possible to keep prisoners out of their cells . . . and attempts to prevent overcrowding are now meaningless."

Squeeze looms in public sector

Michael White
Political Editor

PUBLIC sector employees and their unions are expecting more job losses in health and education services as ministers insist that expected 3 per cent pay rises in 1996 should be funded out of productivity or efficiency savings.

The Treasury last night refused to confirm overnight reports that the five review boards which oversee pay for the medical, teaching and military professions are about to recommend to the Cabinet that pay rises should be at or above the current 3.1 per cent rate of inflation.

But the term Treasury officials used, that the reports were "speculation", usually amounts to tacit endorsement.

Last night it prompted the shadow chief Treasury secretary, Andrew Smith, to predict that, if ministers accept the proposed awards, it would mean "either breaking their own public spending targets or slashing services", since at least £300 million more would have to be found for pay awards.

The coming year, 1996/97, is the third year running that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, has insisted on self-funded pay rises.

These rise, according to Mr Clarke, must go alongside so-called efficiency savings which are said to achieve a 2 per cent real increase in resources through non-replacement of staff and other changes.

Since pay makes up two-thirds of public sector running costs, a 3 per cent deal would imply a further 2 per cent squeeze — making 4 per cent in all, and a total of £600 million, Mr Smith said.

In reality, sustaining what Mr Clarke calls "a tight regime" forces public sector managers to choose between paring away at services or cutting staff, a choice which in practice often amounts to the same thing.

Ministers, some of whom helped stir the pay battles which preceded the fall of the Labour government in 1979, face the prospect of a rematch as unions flex their muscles in the Tories' twilight period.

The prospect emerged as Labour warned that thousands of families have been thrown out of their homes and many more remain in the negative equity trap because of the Government's economic policies.

Labour's housing spokesman, Nick Raynsford, warned that hopes of a housing recovery would "prove elusive".

Figures from the City brokers UBS showed that in the third quarter of 1995 1.4 million households were in negative equity — compared to 1.1 million in 1994.

Negative equity occurs where mortgage debt is greater than the value of a property.

Hollywood to coach EU young guns

Stephen Bates in Brussels

AMERICAN film and television producers, anxious to head off a French-led campaign for quotas limiting the number of Hollywood soap operas on EU screens, are to put $2 million (£1.32 million) into training young European directors and technicians in film-making.

The project, which has emerged out of meetings between executives from Hollywood and Europe, will send European film-makers to California for courses in script and project development, production, marketing and distribution. American money will also be spent on the European film college at Ebeltoft in Denmark.

The scheme follows attempts — led by France — to use the European Commission to impose limits on the proportion of non-European television broadcasts.

The initiative is designed to improve transatlantic links in the industry. Candidates will be proposed by the European Producers' Club and then selected by Hollywood companies. There is no guarantee that they will not stay on in Los Angeles afterwards.

Among those signed up are the studio bosses of Warner Brothers, MCA Universal, Columbia Tri-Star and Turner Broadcasting, Britain's Sir David Puttnam and top German, Italian and French producers.

The training initiative, which should fund about 22 traineeships in each of the next five years, was welcomed by members of the European Parliament who were instrumental in setting it up. Alan Donnelly, the Labour MEP for Tyneside who helped to formulate the scheme, said: "We are all in favour of projects which will strengthen the European film industry and head off talk of quotas."

The French favour quotas as a means of protecting Europe's — and especially their own — cultural identity, allegedly under threat because the audio-visual industry was excluded from last year's Gatt international trade agreement with the US.

France has made repeated attempts, despite opposition from Britain and Germany, to tighten the 1990 Television Without Frontiers directive calling for more than half the output of European broadcasting channels to be produced within the EU. The French want to remove a get-out clause with the words "where practicable", which has undermined the proposal.

Britain, Germany and the Scandinavian countries say satellite broadcasting makes quotas impracticable.

But France's culture minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, claims things have got so bad that French children only recognise police cars and ambulances which have American-sounding sirens.

Moves by Paris appeared to have no effect on the Christmas schedules of French television channels however, which featured Dallas, Cannon, and *Disney Club Noël*. At cinemas, Pocahontas, *Sur la Route de Madison* (The Bridges of Madison County), *Sauvez Willy 2* (Free Willy 2) and Reservoir Dogs were doing good business.

In contrast with France's attempts to protect its industry, the British government last month cut its £2 million grant to Eurimages, the main European film funding agency, which has financed 56 British films.

Moving . . . 'Those who lose the war don't have a lot of choice,' said Sekul Skocojic, a Bosnian Serb soldier poised to quit his bunker around Sarajevo yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN WEAVER

Bosnian Serb troops leave before Nato deadline

The first hurdle of the Dayton peace pact looks like being safely cleared, writes **Julian Borger** on Mount Trebevic

IN DRIVING snow, Bosnian government and Serb forces yesterday withdrew from frontline positions around Sarajevo, ahead of a Nato-imposed deadline, in an important step towards defusing the military stand-off around the city.

In trenches and fox-holes along the city's southern front on Mount Trebevic, Serb fighters waited glumly under a thickening blizzard for the order to move out. Less than a hundred yards down the slope, Bosnian government soldiers were abandoning similar positions.

French troops with the Nato peace implementation force (I-FOR) patrolled both sides to monitor compliance with the first deadline of the Dayton peace agreement: withdrawal from strategic positions along the Sarajevo front line by midnight last night.

A few hours before the deadline expired, a handful of the 40-odd fortified positions were still occupied by opposing troops. But Nato officials said compliance on both sides had been "excellent" and they were "reasonably confident" the deadline would be met.

Bad weather and confusion were the main concerns on Mount Trebevic, which forms Sarajevo's southern wall. The Serb frontline follows a road along the mountain contours, a few hundred feet above the city. High wooden fences shield the road from enemy eyes. On the other side, mud-filled trenches link a network of bunkers, like a scene from the first world war.

Sekul Skocojic's bunker has been his home since 1992, when Serb forces pulled out of Sarajevo to bombard the city from above. Yesterday, he spent his last few hours in the cramped smoke-filled wooden shelter. "Most of the others have gone already. I'll go as soon as I-FOR arrives," he said. "Those who lose the war don't have a lot of choice. And we lost the war."

The sense of defeat is deeply ingrained in Serb ranks around Sarajevo. In under three months time, their territory around the capital will be handed to the government unless I-FOR commanders agree to extend the Dayton deadlines.

Most Serbs say they will leave before the deadline and take their property with them. On the road outside Mr Skocojic's bunker, a convoy of four large trucks rolled by, carrying heavy machinery almost certainly ripped out of rebel-held factories.

Colonel Mark Rayner, a Nato spokesman, said there was nothing I-FOR could do to prevent the asset-stripping. "We're not here to stop people moving," he said.

Bosnian Croats have also burnt and looted towns and villages due to be ceded to the Serbs in western Bosnia.

The Serb soldiers sitting around smoking and listening to Madonna on a radio, could not even look forward to going home. Most lived in Grbavica, a Serb-held district due to be handed over, and feared what would happen to them.

They blamed the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic — who negotiated the Dayton agreement on their behalf — for their plight. "If Milosevic was here today, he would be a dead man," said one soldier.

The implementation of the Dayton agreement in Sarajevo is largely the responsibility of 10,000 French troops, but the United States lent a hand yesterday by contributing anti-artillery radar for the Bosnian capital.

US troops are based in the north of the country, and have been reluctant to spread their responsibilities, fearful of the "mission creep" which sucked them disastrously into the Somalia conflict. Some US officers have expressed concern that providing the two American radar systems would burden the US with shared responsibility for the city's security.

● Helicopters plucked 60 French Foreign Legionnaires to safety yesterday when flash floods engulfed their tented camp outside the southern Bosnian town of Mostar. Driving rain also jeopardised plans by US engineers to throw two pontoon bridges across the Sava river, dividing Croatia and Bosnia, by the weekend.

Leader comment, page 10

Policemen 'ritually executed' fellow Solar Temple cultists

Paul Webster in Paris

TWO policemen ritually executed 14 members of the Solar Temple religious cult before setting their own clothes alight and committing suicide with their service revolvers, a public prosecutor in Grenoble, south-east France, said yesterday.

Jean-François Lorans gave details of the preliminary post mortem findings on the 13 French and Swiss adults and three children found dead in a forest clearing last week, their bodies laid out in the form of a star.

All belonged to the Order of the Solar Temple, whose leaders were among the 53 who died in a similar mass suicide or murder in October 1994 in Switzerland and Canada.

The bodies found last week at Saint-Pierre-de-Cherennes near Grenoble had all been burned, Mr Lorans said. The adults were shot in the head and chest and the three girls, aged two, four and six, had bullet wounds in the head.

Two were daughters of one of the dead policeman, Jean-Pierre Lardanchet, aged 36, whose wife also died. Lardanchet and the other policeman, Patrick Rostand, aged 29, methodically killed their companions, who had previously taken sleeping drugs, Mr Lorans said.

They poured white spirit on the bodies and their own clothes, started a fire and shot themselves in the head. Mr Lorans did not rule out the possibility that other people were involved.

The Order of the Solar Temple has predicted a millennium doomsday and believes that ritual sacrifice will save its followers from the wrath of God. It has about 400 members in France.

A French parliamentary commission has recommended the setting up of a permanent observer group to monitor the activities of the country's estimated 150 religious cults and their 300,000 members.

World news in brief

Jail after mall collapse

The owner of a Seoul shopping mall that collapsed, killing 501 and injuring 900, was found guilty of negligence and sentenced to 10 and a half years in jail yesterday.

Lee Joon, aged 73, was found to be at fault for the collapse of the five-story centre on June 30. Relatives of the victims demanded the death penalty. — AP.

Drugs disaster

Dutch customs seized more than 16 tons of marijuana from a drug ring but the smugglers stole it back, newspapers reported yesterday. A spokesman for the public prosecutors' office confirmed 33,000lbs of marijuana were snatched from customs authorities last February. — AP.

Lost at sea

Darkness halted a search yesterday for nine seamen missing since the Russian trawler Novgorodets sank off Arctic Norway on Tuesday, Norwegian sea rescue services said. Fifteen seamen were rescued by a Russian trawler and one dead body was found. The search was expected to continue today. — Reuter.

Unpopular Queen

Fifty-six per cent of voters want an Australian to be head of state instead of the Queen, according to an opinion poll published in the Australian newspaper yesterday. Results of the survey show only 36 per cent want to be ruled by the British monarch. — AP.

Crime beat

A Russian crime reporter was beaten to death outside his home in eastern Siberia yesterday, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. Vadim Alferyev died after being hit repeatedly over the head with a metal rod. He had been writing about economic crime in the region, it said. — AP.

Chinese kidnaps

Chinese police have broken two kidnapping rings and rescued at least 17 boys, it was reported yesterday. The Xinmen Evening News said six boys were recently returned from central Henan Province to their families in Sichuan Province and 11 boys were found when police nabbed another kidnapping gang elsewhere. — AP.

Lucky leap

A 23-year-old man survived an attempted suicide jump of 220 feet off the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, landing just yards from a psychiatrist out in a rowing boat with a lifejacket and cellular phone. Dennis Tison saw the man floating in the bay on Tuesday afternoon, tossed him his lifejacket and used the phone to call police. — AP.

World's oldest woman gets last laugh at hapless speculator

A LAWYER who gambled in a property deal in 1965 that an elderly woman would soon die, only to see her live to become the world's oldest person, has himself died aged 77.

The lawyer, Andre-Francois Raffray, was buried yesterday in the southern French city of Arles after dying on Christmas day, a secretary in his law firm said. The woman, Jeanne Calment, celebrated Christmas with a meal at an Arles hotel, looking forward to her 121st birthday on February 21, the Arles city hall said.

When Ms Calment was 90, Raffray, then 47, agreed to pay her a "rent" of Fr2,500 (more than £320) a month until she died, on condition he would inherit her house in Arles, a system common in France.

Over the next 30 years, Raffay paid Ms Calment more than Fr900,000, three times the value of the house. "We all make bad deals in life," Ms Calment teased Raffray on her 120th birthday. — Reuter.

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Clinton swamped by Republican tide

Jonathan Freedland in Washington reviews a year in which a quarter-century of liberal legislation has been rolled back

IN THE dying days of 1995, Democrats are gearing up for a year which will be a referendum not just on Bill Clinton but on the entire American liberal agenda — now under the most sustained assault in political memory.

Although the polls show Mr Clinton ahead and the House Speaker Newt Gingrich with record unpopularity, the legislative scorecard for 1995 reveals the Republicans' complete domination.

In every sphere of political life what they call the Republican Revolution — often driven by the party's sponsors in big business — has rolled back decades of liberal lawmaking.

● Abortion: The Republicans have tightly restricted public funding for abortion and outlawed a specific late-term procedure. Abortion-rights activists say they face "death by a thousand cuts", making abortion not illegal but impossible to obtain.

● Welfare: They have voted to abolish the basic federal safety net, ending state benefits as an entitlement of the very poor.

● The environment: They have gutted green laws and branded the federal enforcement agency "the Gestapo of government". Opponents call their "regulatory reform" a polluters' charter.

● Consumer rights: They have passed laws making it harder to sue the makers of faulty products. Food producers face fewer inspections. Health and safety at work rules — never stringent — are further relaxed.

From clean water to school lunches, from smoking to oil-drilling, the US legal landscape has been broken down and rebuilt in the image of the Republicans — and their rich friends.

Democrats admit that 1995 has indeed been the year of the Republican. Their agenda, not Mr Clinton's, has dominated legislation. The president has been left to fend, parry and veto their ideas: stripped of any mechanism by which to generate his own.

Consumer activists have watched open-mouthed as the new controllers of Congress blatantly do the bidding of their paymasters.

Take Thomas Bliley, a congressman from the tobacco state of Virginia, who counts Philip Morris among his most generous constituents.

He settled into the chair of the commerce committee — which oversees the cigarette industry among others — and announced straight away that he saw "no reason" to continue its hearings into the tobacco industry.

Last year, under the Democrats, the hearings into the tobacco industry gripped the country as manufacturers faced charges that they had knowingly spiked cigarettes with nicotine to boost their addictiveness.

The hearings came close to nailing tobacco executives for concealing how much they knew about nicotine's power to addict and to harm. There were moves to have cigarette-makers placed under the authority that governs drugs and to have almost all public spaces declared no-smoking areas. Mr Bliley duly put a stop to it all.

Oil producers did not like the federal 55mph speed limit, imposed after the energy crisis of the early 1970s, because it reduced petrol consumption. Congress abolished it, allowing states to set their own limits.

The National Restaurant Association did not like the child labour laws or the Fair Labour Standards Act, which requires a 40-hour working week and overtime paid at time-and-a-half. It gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to Newt Gingrich's various fundraising bodies and — with speedy despatch — the Republicans acted to relax the rules. The house ethics committee was called in when a note from a restaurateur was found, attached to a $25,000 cheque, reading: "Newt — thanks for the help on today's committee hearing."

But the sphere where policy-for-sale has been most visible is the environment, specifically what the New York Times called "25 years of legislative history aimed at making America's waters drinkable, swimmable and fishable".

In the name of cutting red tape Mr Gingrich has secured legislation which makes laws like the Clean Water Act all but impossible to enforce. Regulators now have to go through a complex cost-benefit analysis before taking action, leaving the polluters free to dirty the environment.

Republicans have slashed funds for the the Environmental Protection Agency and frozen the official list of endangered species. Oil companies which want to drill in the Alaska wilderness may soon get their way, as may loggers eyeing Alaska's virgin Tongass National Forest. Project Relief, a coalition of 115 corporations which made $10.3 million in political donations, must feel it is getting its money's worth.

The sheer blatancy of some of these measures has dented Republican poll numbers badly. Mr Clinton says he is vetoing their budget because it violates American values. But all he can do is wield his pen.

The federal bulldozer may be crushing much of the achievement of the past 25 years but Mr Clinton is not in the driving seat. Democrats admit that even if he wins in November, the most he can hope for is another four years on the brakes.

> From clean water to school lunches, from smoking to oil-drilling, the US legal landscape has been broken down and rebuilt in the image of the Republicans — and their rich friends

Israelis leave Ramallah under hail of stones

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

ISRAELI troops pulled out of the West Bank town of Ramallah yesterday, ending 28 years of occupation and completing the current phase of handovers to the Palestinian Authority.

They were sped on their way by stones thrown by Palestinians waiting to greet the incoming forces of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, but the handover was mostly orderly.

Ramallah, just eight miles north of Jerusalem, is seen by many West Bank Palestinians as the interim capital of their emerging state. Several of the Palestinian Authority's institutions are based there, including the election commission which will oversee next month's crucial poll for a new legislative council.

The PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, who insists that the new Palestine will eventually have its capital in east Jerusalem, annexed by Israel in 1967, has said he will keep his headquarters in Gaza City for the time being. He is expected to visit Ramallah later this week, for the now customary rapturous reception.

In the last seven weeks, Israel has pulled its troops out of six cities where the bulk of the West Bank's 1 million Palestinians live: Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Ramallah.

It has also handed over day-to-day security powers in scores of smaller Arab towns and villages, while retaining overall authority.

In roughly 70 per cent of the West Bank, however, the occupation will continue as before, with Israeli troops remaining in large numbers to guard the 140,000 or so Jewish settlers who have colonised the territory since the 1967 Six Day War.

Israel has spent millions of pounds building bypass roads around the self-rule Palestinian enclaves, so that settlers and other Israelis will not have to drive through the Arab cities. Settler spokesmen have criticised these roads as unsafe, and say they violate the principle that Jews should be able to move anywhere in what they insist is the land of Israel.

Settler demonstrations against the West Bank handovers have been muted since the November 4 assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, by a Jewish zealot. But fears of clashes remain, as Palestinian police consolidate control of the main towns, and begin to operate joint patrols with Israeli forces in areas of shared control.

There is also concern among officials and rightwing opponents of the peace accords that militants from both communities could try to undermine the power-sharing deal through violence.

Next year will bring the biggest test: partial Israeli withdrawal from the flashpoint city of Hebron. Many Palestinians were outraged when Mr Arafat reluctantly agreed to a continued Israeli presence in the ancient town, where some 450 Jewish settlers live among more than 100,000 Arabs.

The redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron is expected in March, after the Palestinian elections and the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. That delicate operation will be followed in May by talks on a permanent peace treaty, when the future of the West Bank will again come up for negotiation.

Hopes high at peace talks

MIDDLE East peace negotiators from Syria and Israel met in rural Maryland yesterday for the first face-to-face talks in six months.

Hopes for a land-for-peace breakthrough were high on both sides after Syria's President Hafez al-Assad said he wanted to speed up the peace process.

I believe that [Israel's Prime Minister Shimon] Peres wants to deal with more openness," he said.

Mr Peres said: "We do have expectations of the negotiations this time from the Syrians." — Reuter.

Palestinians jeer and throw stones as Israeli jeeps leave the police station in Ramallah yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME DELAY

Shrimp force catches a crab

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

AFTER the Bay of Pigs, make way for the Boat of Shrimps: the latest vehicle, apparently, for an attempt to invade Cuba and unseat Fidel Castro.

The FBI is holding three Cuban-born men after finding the 62ft Heather Catrina stuffed with guns and ammunition and supplied with detailed maps and video tapes of Cuba: material, they believe, for a violent uprising against the communist regime in Havana.

The three are a father and son, René Cruz senior and junior, and Rafael García. They were picked up in Los Angeles last week and charged with conspiracy to violate the Neutrality Act by fomenting a revolution in a foreign land. If convicted, they could be jailed for eight years.

FBI agents say the Heather Catrina could carry up to 30 people: small fry compared to the 1,300 exiled warriors of Brigade 2506, the force which mounted the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

And Operation Shrimp Boat got off to a hapless start. The would-be commandos bought the vessel in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Robert Walcott, the fisherman who sold it, said they were so inexperienced that the first time they took the Heather Catrina out, it ran aground.

"I never suspected anything, because they really didn't know anything about boats," Mr Walcott said.

He was shocked to hear their true purpose. "They were the nicest group of guys you could ask for."

The crustacean invasion joins a roll-call of failed US attempts to unseat Dr Castro, including CIA plots to kill him with an exploding cigar and exploit his passion for scuba diving with an underwater assassination attempt.

Floods and fights claim 300 lives in S Africa

David Beresford in Johannesburg

FACTION fighting among migrant workers home for Christmas and flash floods which swept away squatter camps claimed the lives of at least 300 people in South Africa this week, and many more deaths are expected as the holiday season and bad weather continue.

As flood waters poured down the Edendale Valley in KwaZulu-Natal, destroying hundreds of shanty huts erected during a long drought, 135 people were killed in political and criminal violence in the same province.

Police, who did not intercede to stem the violence, pointed out that the figure was not that much worse than the previous weekend, when 90 were murdered in KwaZulu-Natal.

The same pattern of murder and massacre is familiar throughout South Africa. In what used to be the Transkei bantustan, 28 people have been killed since last Friday — 17 stabbed and 11 shot. In the Cape Town area, at least seven died, including one man who police said was tied up with wire and beaten to death, allegedly by his brother and 14 accomplices.

In the industrial heartland of Gauteng, the local police minister said urgent steps were being taken to deal with a murderous campaign against police reservists, three of whom have been killed since Saturday. Another six civilians were murdered in separate incidents on the East Rand.

Violence, coupled with road accidents — 649 dead throughout the country this month — is why the Johannesburg blood transfusion service is down to one day's supply.

There are sociological explanations for most of this national mayhem. The flood deaths can be blamed on the disregard for the lives of the dispossessed which is a heritage of apartheid.

The minister of water affairs, Kadar Asmal, said yesterday that about 150,000 shanty dwellers live on flood plains. In Edendale, sirens had been sounded when a cloudburst was reported but a flash flood hit the squatter camps within 20 minutes, preventing evacuation.

The politically-motivated killings familiar to KwaZulu-Natal are more complex. But a contributory factor appears to be the return of migrant workers to rural communities for the holiday season. Welcomed home by women and old men with accumulated grievances against neighbouring communities, fuelled with large quantities of potent home-brew, tribesmen explode on to the warpath.

At Izingolweni on the KwaZulu-Natal coast, 600 Zulus brandishing spears and guns swept through local kraals on Christmas Day, leaving at least 19 dead.

The grievances behind the blood-letting may lie anywhere from contemporary rivalry between the African National Congress and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party to ancient and obscure vendettas. One feud which regularly claims lives on the south coast is fought over a leopard killed in the 1930s by Zulus who then accused another Zulu community of stealing the animal's whiskers, which are highly prized.

Criminal violence in the rest of the country is blamed to a large extent on apartheid, with its legacy of poverty, over-crowding and unemployment, compounded by alcohol. One argument even blames road carnage on apartheid: rich whites race to the beaches in high-powered cars while blacks, packed into buses and vans, race to their families scattered in the remote "dumping grounds" that were the bantustans.

But all this belongs to the old South Africa. One saving grace for the people is the hope they nurse for the future. According to a national survey, 58 per cent of South Africans believe that 1996 will be a better year — if they live that long.

Burial in Ghana is dead trendy business

Birds, fish, mother hens . . . designer coffins come in all shapes, but don't ask for a Mercedes, writes **Howard French** in Teshi

SEATED in his roadside workshop, where he puts the finishing touches to a coffin in the form of a bush taxi that is realistic down to the curves of the front bumper, Laryea Okai seems stumped by the question of how *he* would choose to be buried.

For one of Ghana's master coffin-makers, the decision is not simple. The choices include gigantic crabs and lobsters, which seem to long for the surf, and man-sized pods of cocoa and ears of corn.

"I'm not ready to make that kind of choice yet," Mr Okai, aged 33, says smiling. "But when it is time for me to go, I think I would like to be buried as a hammer or a saw. I love my tools."

In the meantime, this sinewy 20-year veteran of the trade is enjoying a boom in designer coffins that has swept this two-mile stretch of coastal road, where carpenters of his Ga ethnic group have long hammered together exotic burial vessels.

It is not that more people are dying, he says, but that suddenly what had been an honour reserved for chiefs has caught on with the public. When death strikes in West Africa, even the poorest dig out their savings to organise feasts and hire musicians, so that their loved ones are seen off in style. The wealthier have special cloth printed, often bearing the likeness of the deceased, to be worn by participants in the funeral.

But for many Ghanaians, burial in an ordinary coffin is becoming déclassé. More and more choose a carved and painted coffin as the ultimate status symbol for the burial of their relatives.

A coffin in the shape of a loaf of bread might be a family's choice for a baker, a fish for a fisherman, a huge hen for the mother of a large family — whatever best serves as a statement about the deceased's life or livelihood.

"Most of what I do is still for chiefs," Mr Okai says, pointing to the dozen or so coffins that crowd his dusty workplace, none the rectangular box commonly associated with burial.

"Some people will come in and order a Mercedes or a Bedford lorry, and I will have to turn them down. I am an artist and I save my art for those who can appreciate it."

Mr Okai can afford to turn his nose up at some customers. He runs a handsome sideline selling to collectors in Europe and the United States. In a country where the annual per capita income is about £260, his works often fetch £1,300 or more.

Down the road, Paa Joe, aged 50, will have none of his colleague's snobbery. He has been building designer coffins for 18 years, and remembers the days when tradition, more than popular tastes, governed the business.

"There was a time when we too only sold to chiefs and the like," Mr Joe says, his prosperous waist peeking out from under his T-shirt. "Now we average 10 or so a month."

Mr Joe is considered by many of his peers to be the coffin world's ultimate craftsman. Among his wealthy clientele, some customers are known to buy their coffins long before death, displaying them as a decoration at home.

As he flips through his catalogue of creations, Mr Joe seems proudest of the requests that have posed the most unusual challenges.

"I once had to make a coffin for a lorry driver," he says. "The man's colleagues insisted I build a lorry complete with all the wiring: a hooter, the headlights, a radio and cassette player, even a light on the top. I told them there was nothing I could do about the battery once it had run down."

In a region where poverty stunts people's lives, Mr Joe likens being a coffin-builder to being a sort of Santa Claus of the afterlife.

"Someone may have wanted to travel overseas all of their life, but never made it beyond their village," he says, pointing to a scale model of an Air Canada jet, seemingly ready for take-off. "It makes people very happy when their relatives offer them something like this for burial. It makes me happy too." — New York Times.

Many of Paa Joe's customers buy his coffins long before death, displaying them at home PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT GROSSMAN

There is one revolution which has quickened its pace over the 20th century, and which promises to accelerate: the relationship between men and women. If much of the political and technological landscape is similar to that of 30 years ago, here the terrain is convulsed with change and fissures.

Will Hutton page 11

هكذا من الاصل

James Meade

Economic forces in a social context

WITH the death of James Meade the country has lost its most outstanding economist — the one who, by general consent, should have been first to win appointment to the Order of Merit. Meade, who was 88, had maintained a constant interest in ways of improving the economic and social organisation of the country. He was attending an economic conference only a fortnight ago, in an advanced stage of leukaemia, having published earlier this year one more book showing how the existing system might be improved.

Throughout his career Meade addressed himself to the big issues: how to reduce unemployment, control inflation and maintain external balance, pursuing economic theory not as an end in itself but as a guide to policy. He looked at economic forces in their social context, seeking to improve the institutional and international framework within which these forces operate, never completely satisfied with his answers and returning again and again to seek better ones. In government during and after the war he showed a remarkable originality and versatility in his proposals. In academic life he gave form and system to a wide range of ideas in a long series of volumes on social and economic principles, bringing out the bearing of these principles on policy and avoiding controversy. In recognition of his work — particularly on international economics — he was awarded a Nobel prize in December 1977.

Born in Bath into a family distantly related to the General Meade who commanded the United States army in the American Civil War, James Meade went from Malvern College in 1926 to Oriel, Oxford, with a scholarship in classics. After two years he moved over to Politics, Philosophy and Economics graduating with a first in 1930. He was elected to a fellowship at Hertford with freedom to spend his first year as a postgraduate student in economics. He accepted an invitation from Dennis Robertson, whom he already knew, to join him at Trinity, Cambridge, as student. There he became a member of the "Circus" that was reporting weekly to Keynes on the ideas emerging from a group made up of Joan and Austen Robinson, Richard Kahn and Piero Sraffa while Keynes was making the transition from the theory outlined in The Treatise On Money (1930) to the more dynamic analysis of the General Theory Of Employment, Interest and Money (1936).

Meade's interest in economics had been kindled largely by concern to find a way of reducing the heavy unemployment of the inter-war years and partly by the writings of a well-known monetary crank, Major Douglas, who attributed unemployment to a systematic defect in the financial system producing a chronic inadequacy of purchasing power. Meade moved first to a view based, like monetarism, on the quantity theory of money and then to one laying emphasis on the difficulty of marrying savings to investment without fluctuations in economic activity. In his first published work, Public Works In Their International Aspect (1933), he dealt with the origins of a depression in terms not very different from Keynes three years later. He showed, like Keynes, how investment during a depression would automatically generate additional savings on the necessary scale by producing an expansion in employment and income.

Meade's interest in economics had been kindled by concern to find a way of reducing the unemployment of the inter-war years

As he put it many years later, it was necessary "to shift economists from thinking normally in terms of a model of reality in which a dog called *Savings!* wagged its tail labelled *Investment* to thinking in terms of a model in which a dog labelled *Investment* wagged his tail labelled *Savings*."

It was typical of Meade that he accompanied this analysis of the problem of unemployment with the publication of a book on a much more theoretical topic, The Rate Of Interest In A Progressive State (1933), discussing how the rate of interest should respond to economic developments and the fluctuations by which economic growth was inevitably accompanied.

Meade's year in Cambridge turned him into a disciple of Keynes at the beginning of his academic career and he remained under the influence of Keynes ever afterwards. But he never went completely overboard in his acceptance of Keynes's ideas. From the 1970s onwards, for example, he urged that policy should aim at stabilising not the real level of national product but instead the monetary value (gnp) so that, if costs and prices rose, the level of unemployment would be allowed to increase. He also retained much of what he had learned from Dennis Robinson on the difficulty of keeping aggregate investment moving steadily upwards.

On his return to Oxford Meade remained for some years at Hertford, where he also served as bursar between 1934 and 1937. In 1936 he produced what served as the first modern textbook, An Introduction To Economic Analysis And Policy. In those years he also produced a number of papers, some of them theoretical in character, others dealing with economic policy. They included a lengthy discussion of the policy that a future Labour government should adopt, intended for publication as a political pamphlet, but witheld by the party.

In 1937 Meade joined the economic staff of the League of Nations in Geneva, where he came into contact with economists of other nationalities soon to be prominent — Tinbergen Haberler and Marcus Fleming. He also was editor of the World Economic Survey for 1937-8 and 1938-9. In April 1940 he was offered a position in the War Cabinet offices and set off shortly afterwards by car with his wife and three children, aged four, two and two weeks, in what proved to be a nightmare journey across France that intersected the disordered flow of refugees streaming south away from the advancing German army. After some initial confusion in which he was directed into the Ministry of Economic Warfare, he was transferred to what became in 1941 the Economic Section of the Cabinet offices and, bombed out in September 1940, took up residence in the office for the next two years.

In the winter of 1940-41 he and Richard Stone together produced the first official estimates of national income in advance of the 1941 Budget. There had of course been many earlier estimates from time to time by economists, but this was the beginning of the regular publication by the government of official estimates — just as the Budget was the first to be framed in accordance with Keynesian ideas of national economic management.

Meade's work on national income was only a small part of his wartime activity. He was particularly occupied with problems of post-war reconstruction, beginning in July 1941 with a paper on measures for the prevention of general unemployment. He had already in 1938 outlined ways in which consumer credits might be used to influence consumer expenditure counter-cyclically. In 1942 he took advantage of the appointment of the Beveridge Committee to submit later ideas of which the most important was his proposal to vary the national insurance contribution of employers with a view to encouraging employment in a slump and discouraging it in a boom. The proposal won the support of Keynes and was included as an appendix to the White Paper on Employment Policy in 1944, of which Meade wrote the first draft in March 1943. His ideas on postwar unemployment policy were further developed in a lengthy comment on Beveridge's Full Employmenmt In A Free Society which, as he pointed out, had much in common with the White Paper of 1944.

A second important initiative was Meade's proposal in 1942 for an international commercial union. This was intended to supplement Keynes's plan for a clearing union and led to extensive discussions between London and Washington with a view to the ultimate establishment of an international trade organisation. Meade took part as a British representative on a preparatory commission that met in 1946-47 to produce a draft charter. The charter, although adopted at the Havana Conference on Trade and Employment in 1948, was not ratified. But many of its principles had been incorporated in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt) negotiated in 1947 which survived as it still does. Meade took an active part in the discussions leading up to the Gatt, of which he was as much as any man the originator. He set out in detail his proposals for a transition period in which import control as well as control over capital movements would be necessary in addition to arrangements limiting drawings on the sterling balances built up in wartime. One of his proposals that did not find favour was for the auctioning of import licences.

Influenced by Keynes without going overboard about his ideas . . . Meade at the time he received the Nobel economics prize in 1977

At the end of the war Meade took over from Lionel Robbins the direction of the Economic Section. He remained for two years during which responsibility was split between Hugh Dalton and Herbert Morrison under whom the Economic Section served. It was not a happy arrangement. Dalton felt in no need of economic advice, while Meade was particularly concerned that budgetary policy should be counter-inflationary. In his last interview with Keynes, early in 1946, he was reduced to tears by Keynes's attack on the use of forecasts in the 1946 Economic Survey, the nearest thing to an economic plan in the post-war years.

In 1947 Meade returned to academic life as Professor of Commerce at the London School of Economics, where he remained for the next 10 years. He began by writing Planning And The Price Mechanism (1948), arguing for the superiority of market mechanisms over government planning as instruments for the co-ordination of economic activity whilst accepting the need for planning of a more limited kind, making use of budgetary and financial policy but not seeking to accomplish through government action what private enterprise could do more successfully.

He then concentrated on the problems of the UK balance of payments and declared his intention of dedicating the next 18 years of his life to a six-volume study of the principles of international trade. Although the design was never completed he finished two magisterial volumes on The Theory Of International Policy (1951 and 1955), one dealing with the balance of payments and the other with the relationship between trade and welfare. It was these volumes that laid the basis for the award of a Nobel prize in 1977.

Meade was also occupied in the 1950s with the problems of economic integration. He produced three books on the subject as well as articles on Benelux and others on the United Kingdom and the European Common Market. But what attracted most attention at the time was his advocacy of floating exchange rates in 1955, at a time when that was still very much a minority view.

As the decade ended he became fascinated by the case of Mauritius, which appeared to suffer from every conceivable economic problem: underdevelopment, unemployment, overpopulation, racial differences, etc. He could point to no obvious solutions. Yet the difficulties he foresaw do not appear to have prevented modest progress over the last 30 years.

Meade was never afraid to embark on lengthy programmes. When he moved to Cambridge in 1957 he conceived a plan to write a series of volumes on domestic aspects of theory and policy. When he had written four — The Stationary Economy (1965), The Growing Economy (1968), The Controlled Economy (1972) and The Just Economy (1976) — he realised that he had "managed only to make a beginning" and reflected on the speed with which the frontiers of knowledge in the different branches of economics were expanding so that "work as hard as one can, one finds oneself further and further away from an understanding of the whole."

Even so he embarked on yet more ventures, presiding in 1974 over an expert committee on the structure and reform of direct taxation and developing with a variety of colleagues the ideas he had sketched in his Nobel Memorial Lecture on "The Meaning Of Internal Balance." Two volumes appeared in the 1980s and were designed to show how full employment could be restored "by concentrating Keynesian financial policies on the control of the *money value* of total national income and engaging in a radical reform of wage-fixing institutions."

Meade was a man of principle and sought above all the principles that should guide a fair and prosperous society. He was never dull and argumentative. He took an optimistic and compassionate view of life. He was a delightful colleague, full of ideas and good humour, modest, inventive, entertaining and full of good sense. He was an enthusiast, but never a dogmatist; clear headed and lucid, systematic and rational. He had many talents including ingenuity as a carpenter, constructing elaborate toys to illustrate economic propositions. He was happily married for over 60 years to a wife who survives him; and he was fortunate also in his four children and numerous grandchildren.

Sir Alec Cairncross

Lord (Douglas) Jay adds: James Meade was the most distinguished British economist world-wide after Keynes this century. In a long life he never ceased wrestling with the problem of maintaining full or nearly full employment in a market economy. He called himself a liberal socialist. As a man he was always scrupulously fair in argument, and never for a moment descended from the paths of sweet reason. The failure of the world outside so often to accept his practical conclusions — for example when he inclined to some sort of incomes policy — disappointed but did not embitter him. He carried on the fight to the very end. All honour to a man who deserved to live in a more rational world.

James Meade, economist, born June 23, 1907; died December 22, 1995

Nicolas Slonimsky

Well-chosen words for modern music

NICOLAS Slonimsky, who has died at the age of 101, was an encyclopaedist, lexicographer and musicologist of formidably wide erudition. He was also one of the most sheerly entertaining writers of his time, evincing a wit and panache largely absent from musical discourse since the days of Bernard Shaw.

Although his fame rests upon his many indispensable works of reference, he started out as a practising musician. Born in St Petersburg in 1894, the year that saw the last Tsar ascend the throne of Russia, he began to study the piano there at the age of six, under the supervision of his maternal aunt, the formidable Isabelle Vengerova. She was a pupil of Leschetizky, who emigrated to America and became the first professor of piano at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and the teacher of Leonard Bernstein and Samuel Barber.

As a child Slonimsky was inspired to excel by the achievements of his remarkable family which, in his words, consisted largely of novelists, revolutionary poets, literary critics, university professors, translators, chessmasters, economists, mathematicians, inventors of useless artificial languages, Hebrew scholars, and speculative philosophers.

Having studied harmony and orchestration at the St Petersburg Conservatory with Maximilian Steinberg, the son-in-law of Rimsky-Korsakov, he became a rehearsal pianist and, after the Revolution, made his way, via Turkey and Bulgaria, to Paris. There he served as secretary to the expatriate Russian conductor Serge Koussevitzky, whom he guided through the tricky rhythms of Stravinsky's Rite Of Spring, but who nevertheless fired him for insubordination. Slonimsky also studied conducting with Albert Coates.

By then he had found his way to the US, mastering English sufficiently to write on music for Boston's two finest papers, the Evening Transcript and the Christian Science Monitor. He taught at the Boston Conservatory and at Harvard (Slavonic languages, as well as music), but yearned for success as a conductor and composer. To this end he founded the Boston Chamber Orchestra, which gave the first performances of works by Varèse, Henry Cowell and Charles Ives. In 1931 he led the group in the world premieres of Charles Ives's Three Places In New England and of Edgard Varèse's Ionization, two key works of 20th-century music.

If his compositions are few in number and negligible in quality, his many books are superb

A tireless proponent of contemporary music, Slonimsky managed to persuade the board of the Los Angeles Philharmonic to let him give a series of concerts featuring contemporary American, Cuban and Mexican music. If the concerts did nothing else they proved that, in 1933, the taste of Southern California's music lovers did not extend beyond the tried and true. With the disastrous reception of these concerts, Slonimsky's conducting career came to a sudden and, as it turned out, permanent halt.

His career as a composer proved mostly uneventful, and in any case petered out in the late 1940s, though not without a bang. The only orchestral work he thought anything of was My Toy Balloon (1942), a set of variations on a Brazilian song, at the climax of which 100 coloured balloons are popped fortissimo.

If his compositions are few in number and negligible in quality, his books are many and superb. Notwithstanding New Grove, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, which Slonimsky wrote and edited for nearly four decades, remains indispensable. Among the other works of musical reference he produced over a span of some 50 years, the most notable are Music Since 1900, the International Cyclopaedia Of Music And Musicians, and the delightful Lexicon Of Musical Invective.

However, for Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians Slonimsky above all achieved a level of accuracy unprecedented in the genre, correcting thousands of persistent mistakes and misapprehensions, such as the canard that Mozart was buried in a snowstorm. Slonimsky himself committed some blunders, of course, but fewer than most writers of such books. In any case, factual error is an occupational risk in the field of lexicography. What he offered, above all, was a combination of wit and insight.

His obituary of Alfred Newman, for example, identified him as "one of the few successful writers of cinematic music not born in Vienna, author of nearly 300 motion picture scores, which transmogrified the most marketable elements found in the symphonies of Tchaikovsky, in the piano works of Rachmaninoff and in the operas of Wagner." As Charles Ives once wrote to him: "Anyone can write a good symphony . . . But only you and Sam Johnson can write a good encyclopaedia".

Slonimsky . . . he combined wit and insight ROBERT BECKHARD

Dale Harris

Christopher Driver adds: The Lexicon Of Musical Invective was also known as the Schlimpflexikon, "culled by dint of persistent digging in the massed files of music magazines and newspapers in American and abroad . . . A special feature of the book is the Invecticon, an index of invectives in alphabetical order from Aberration to Zoo ("feeding-time at, fire at, insanely raging, sleeping of, and spring fever in": look up Zoo for Schoenberg, Varèse, Webern and Stravinsky).

Not surprisingly, most of the excerpts come from the 20th century and the chuckle derives from the dates: the New York Tribune's view of Ravel's String Quartet in 1906 is, after all, almost reasonable, compared with the London Times in 1924: "To hear a whole programme of Ravel's is like watching some midget or pygmy doing clever, but very small, things within a limited scope. Moreover, the almost reptilian cold-bloodedness, which one suspects of having been consciously cultivated, is almost repulsive when heard in bulk; even its beauties are like the markings on snakes and lizards."

Meanwhile, Rudolf Louis's criticism of Debussy's string quartet and Max Reger's Sinfonietta, also in 1906, provoked Reger's famous letter to Louis in the Münchener: "Ich sitze in dem kleinsten Zimmer in meinem Hause. Ich habe Ihre Kritik vor mir. Im nächsten Augenblick wird sie hinter mir sein." ("I am sitting in the smallest room in my house. I have your review in front of me. In a moment it will be behind me.")

Nicolas (Nikolai Leonidovich) Slonimsky, born April 27, 1894; died December 25, 1995

Arthur Mee

The scientific Mee generation

ARTHUR MEE, who has died aged 89, was the man behind the 1960s revolution in school science curricula in Britain and the Commonwealth. As one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and then senior science inspector in Scotland, he organised radical new physics, chemistry and biology curricula, and later introduced an entirely new approach to integrated science for the first two years of secondary school. These programmes were very successfully adapted in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, southern Africa, Nigeria, Malta and the Caribbean.

A principal reason for the universal appeal of Mee's curricula was the nature and organisation of Scottish education. The size of population and the integrated system of school, higher education and examining boards provided a good testbed for ideas and — for Commonwealth countries — an appropriate model. Mee used the ideas and practical experience of teachers in schools of all kinds, with pupils in a broad ability range.

'A J', as Mee was known to friends and colleagues, was ably supported by talented young HMI inspectors. Ideas and practice were underpinned by first-class teaching materials written by authors who were to become household names in school science. These approaches had to work for average teachers in typical schools with modest resources. A J had a remarkable ability to get people to work very hard without resorting to cajolery. To his younger, sometimes headstrong colleagues he was a calm father-figure who smoothed their way through the education establishment.

His energy was compelling. Well after normal retirement age, he was promoting the Scottish science curricula abroad — for the British Council and similar agencies. I once met him, as publisher of Scottish material at Heinemann, at Heathrow on his way to run a science workshop in the Caribbean. I asked him to go, immediately on his return, to Nigeria to run a workshop for the local science teachers association, and produce materials for a new, Scottish-based integrated science scheme. On the first day in Ibadan the participants were looking forward to the usual talking shop. Mee politely but firmly corrected this misapprehension. They were there to create publishable materials. Each person had a topic and was asked to deliver a section of text to him within five days for his comment and 'revision' (ie rewriting by A J). A fortnight later he returned with a complete course — pupils' texts and teachers' guides — for a two-year science course. The resulting books sold millions of copies through the Nigerian Science Teachers' Association.

Mee's Physical Chemistry (1934) was a standard textbook for first degree courses for three decades. Forty years later, he co-wrote a best-selling textbook series for Scottish integrated science. Educated at Woolwich Polytechnic and Trinity College, Cambridge, he became a school science teacher, and later head of science at Glasgow Academy, before being appointed HMI in 1946. He was an active member of his local Congregationalist Church. His first wife died in 1985, and he is survived by his second wife and the son and daughter of his first marriage.

Hamish MacGibbon

Arthur James Mee, educationist and science textbook author, born May 12, 1906; died December 13, 1995

Birthdays

Air Commodore Molly Allott, former director, WRAF, 77; **Intikhab Alam**, Pakistan cricket manager, 54; **Lew Ayres**, actor, 87; **Terry Butcher**, footballer, 37; **William Camps**, former master, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 85; **Donald Carr**, cricket umpire, 69; **Maj Madeleine Craggs**, secretary, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 50; **Sandra Faber**, American astronaut, 51; **Max Hastings**, editor, London Evening Standard, 50; **Roy Hattersley**, Labour MP, journalist, 63; **Martin Llowarch**, chairman, Transport Development Group, 60; **Nigel Kennedy**, violinist, 39; **Michael Marland**, educationist, 61; **Frances Morrell**, former leader, ILEA, 58; **Hildegarde Neff**, actress, singer and writer, 70; **Bridget Prentice**, Labour MP, 43; **Simon Raven**, author, playwright, 68; **Joan Ruddock**, Labour MP, 52; **Dame Maggie Smith**, actress, 61; **The Rt Rev Bill Westwood**, Bishop of Peterborough, 70.

Death Notices

COOPER, Esther, on December 21st 1995 peacefully in a nursing home and late Prestwich. Esther aged 93yrs will be sadly m ised by her loving brothers William and Samuel, sisters in-law Barbara and Eveline and niece Joan. Funeral service will take place at Heights Methodist Church on Friday December 29th at 9.15am prior to cremitial at Agecroft Crematorium at 10am. All enquiries to Balleys Funeral Service. Tel 0161 773 1071

FRANKLIN, Dr Owen Geoffrey Franklin, GP and artist, died peacefully surrounded by his family on 20th December 1995 at University College Hospital, aged 62 years having bravely fought Cancer for three and a half years. Dearly loved by Sonja, his wife of 31 years, sons Sasha, and Fedja, their wives Talia, and Tanja, his Grandchildren Abe, and Natija, brothers Roger and Joe, sister Nina, cousin Angela, and many other family and friends.
Funeral Service to be held at Golders Green Crematorium (West Chapel) Hoop Lane London NW11 on Friday 29th December at 1.00pm. Instead of flowers the family would appreciate Donations to Hodgkins Disease and Lymphoma Association, PO Box 275, Haddenham Aylesbury Bucks HP17 8JJ. Registered Charity 294642.

HALL, Rachel died 14th December in Namibia. Memorial Service St Peters Hale, Cheshire 11.30 29th December.

SNOW, George Alan Ph.D D.Sc aged 80 years Biochemist of Macclesfield. Peacefully on December 21 1995. Following a long illness beloved husband of Gwyn and a dearly loved father and grandfather. Further enquires to Hooley, Watson and Buckley, Funeral Directors, 7-9 James Street, Macclesfield (01625) 422734.

■To place your announcement telephone 0171 611 9080

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Just say no, and mean it

Nato must not give in to Serb delaying tactics

ONE DEADLINE in Bosnia was being met last night, but another much more substantial one has become the subject of new uncertainty. The withdrawal of troops from both sides in the Sarajevo region was proceeding on schedule as French Nato soldiers moved into the front lines. A few hours had been added to the midnight deadline — a reasonable concession to the weather.

But Tuesday's visit to the Bosnian Serb headquarters at Pale by the new US commander of the Nato peacekeeping forces produced a demand for delay of an entirely different and alarming order. Admiral Leighton Smith, meeting the Serb leaders who front for Radovan Karadzic and General Mladic, was faced with the proposal that the withdrawal of their administration from nine Sarajevo suburbs should extend well beyond the current closing deadline of March 19. Another six months — or even nine — would be needed, they said, to allow time for the Serb population to gain confidence in the transfer of administration to the "Muslim" (as they regard it) administration of the Sarajevo government.

Admiral Smith may have thought that by avoiding an immediate response he was playing a cool game. "I didn't say yes or no," he explained afterwards. "Anything is possible." What he should have said, without a moment's hesitation, was no — or even "hell, no". The admiral has arrived in Bosnia with a well-advertised reputation for toughness. It was he who directed Nato's two-month bombing campaign against Serbian targets this summer which helped drive the Serbs back to the negotiating table. But it is easier to be tough at long range from the air than at close quarters on the ground. The lesson learnt painfully by the UN forces — for which they were pilloried at Nato headquarters — may now be repeated by Nato's own forces unless the learning curve of Admiral Smith and his staff is very quickly advanced. He does have the power under the agreements to lengthen deadlines, but this demand was impertinent. The hesitation has already caused worries — this time among the outgoing UN — that the Bosnian Serbs may use delaying tactics to try to sink the whole plan. There are worries too that the commanders of the Russian forces in Bosnia may succumb to Serb tactics. (Their deputy commander has already met Gen Mladic in his headquarters). It would not be the first time that the Bosnian Serbs have successfully exploited the natural reluctance of peacekeeping commanders to threaten force in order to secure compliance. We can only hope that Admiral Smith even now is sending back a firm No. "Never say maybe," should be his motto from now on any substantive issue.

The Bosnian Serbs do have a legitimate point: their supporters in the Sarajevo suburbs may well fear discrimination or worse once the city is unified. The answer must be to mount an effective international presence in the unified city and to bear down hard on any violation by the incoming authorities. Delaying the process only encourages the hope it won't happen.

The whole Dayton-Paris agreement, it should be remembered, is constructed along a time-line due to be completed within a year. If this is going to be judged unrealistically short, then the whole sequence will have to be lengthened, not just a segment of it. That in turn would imply a US willingness to stay long beyond President Clinton's self-imposed, one-year deadline. Interestingly some US commanders in the field are already reported to be asking whether enough can be done in such a short time. If any deadline is to be extended it should be the one at the end, not the one at the beginning.

Gambling away our inventions

Why should exploitation of business ideas be left to the lottery?

ONE of the defining and enduring characteristics of Britain is that we are a nation of inventors. The list of products invented in the UK is long and impressive. It includes the jet engine, optical fibres, the electronic computer, liquid crystal displays, medical scanners, monoclonal antibodies and many others. A report by MITI, the Japanese governmental organisation, found that over 40 per cent of major discoveries during the past 50 years came from the UK. So what's the problem?

The problem is that once we have invented them we lack the ability to carry them through to the market place thereby losing billions of pounds of potential revenues. This is not surprising because the cost of development and marketing can be over a hundred times the cost of the basic research even for a modest product. The list of British inventions exploited more successfully abroad is almost as long as the list of inventions itself. If we could improve our position by only 10 per cent it could have a big effect on growth and employment. The City deals in billions of pounds every day but, sadly, is overwhelmingly interested in funding only established companies where the risks are fairly small. Risk capitalism is not for them. There is thus a big gap in the mechanism enabling fledgling companies to survive and an even bigger one in getting inventions to the stage of being fledgling companies.

In these circumstances everyone should welcome the proposal of a group of businessmen, backed by Nottingham Trent University, which is proposing a National Innovation Centre to help turn more of the 7,000 a year inventions lodged with the patent office into commercial products. There is only one qualification. The group is seeking £4 million from the Millennium Fund to meet half of the cost of the project. We wish them well. If they can't get money from elsewhere then the Millennium Fund may be the answer. But why on earth should such a self-evidently well intentioned scheme with potential payoffs for many industries be dependent on money from the lottery? Isn't this what governments are supposed to be there for? If there is a gap in the market — which existing bodies like the British Technology Group admit there is — why doesn't the Department of Industry step in quickly? The sad answer is that the Government privatised previous institutions like the BTG which did this sort of thing preferring to leave everything to "market forces" even when those same market forces were not interested. If you are an overseas company planning to expand in the UK, the Department of Industry will fall at your feet and shower you with subsidies. If you are one of the thousands of British inventors looking for support you will have to look elsewhere (often abroad). In this way the exploitation of business ideas, vital to future economic growth, is being left to the lottery. If you didn't know it was happening, you couldn't have invented it.

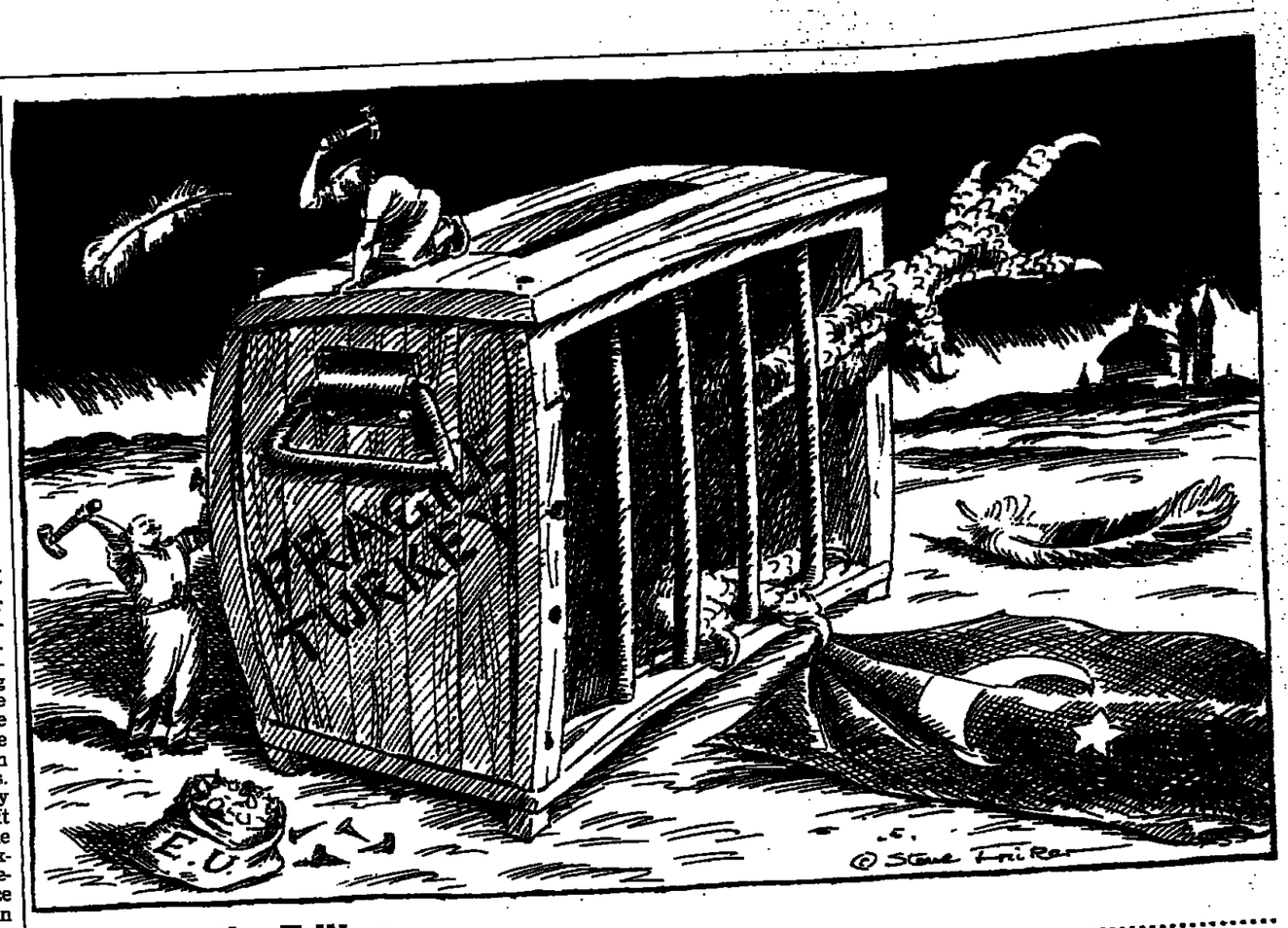
Success on a bed of Hawthorns

West Bromwich Albion won, Guardian leader-writers two

NOT A HAPPY Christmas for West Bromwich Albion of the Endsleigh League First Division, beaten on Boxing Day for the 11th time in succession, and now threatening the post-war record, established in 1988-89 by neighbouring Walsall, of 15 defeats on the trot. Beyond that, and no longer looking entirely unattainable, is the record of 18 successive defeats set in 1898-99 by Darwen: and where are Darwen today?

Even now, compared with some teams in regular competition, Albion's sufferings seem slight. Take, for instance, the rugby league side now known as Highfield, whose victory over Dewsbury in March 1991 was its first in 75 games. Yet soccer supporters are rarely consoled by what happens in rival codes. And as Albion piles defeat on defeat, its followers must be asking themselves: is there any historical formula for reversing this kind of decline?

We are happy to say that there is. At Christmas five years ago, Sheffield United were heading for relegation from the old First Division with just four points in their favour from 16 games. An event then took place which transformed them. In the 16 games that followed, they took 34 points and scored 22 goals, conceding a mere 17. That event — ignored by our rivals — was a sympathetic mention in the leader columns of this newspaper. There were, it is true, even in Sheffield, curmudgeons who failed to acknowledge the source of the club's recovery. "A classic case of the *post hoc, propter hoc* fallacy, know what I mean?" one of the club's full backs was said to have told reporters. We shall see. Yet even if the therapy fails to work in the Midlands as it once worked in Yorkshire, it will still have a 50 per cent success rate. That's not, it is fair to assert, a bad record in any sport. It's certainly better than West Bromwich Albion's.



Letters to the Editor

Let's straighten this thing out

INQUEST (Letters, December 16) must start to get its facts right. Evidence from investigations into deaths in custody is disclosable in both civil and criminal proceedings. The time of disclosure depends on the coroner's wish and on this authority's decision: clearly the inquiry's objectives would not be served by premature release of evidence which might be of use to potential defendants.

We will investigate a minor complaint or a tragic death equally thoroughly, equally objectively and wholly without bias. While we measure our success on the basis of objectivity and thoroughness rather than the number of charges brought, we can point to formal criminal or disciplinary action in at least eight recent deaths in custody involving some 15 officers.

Peter Moorhouse.
Acting Chairman,
Police Complaints Authority.
10 Great George Street,
London SW1P 3AE.

YOU state (Rail bidders under legal cloud, December 22) that Fay Richwhite is "being investigated . . . over an alleged tax fraud". Fay Richwhite is not in fact under investigation by any official body in New Zealand. There is currently a government-appointed Commission of Enquiry into whether the Inland Revenue Department and Serious Fraud Office properly carried out their duties in investigating certain transactions involving a company in which Fay Richwhite, along with two other leading New Zealand companies, was a shareholder. Both the Commissioner of Inland Revenue and the Serious Fraud Office reported that after their investigations there was no evidence of tax evasion or fraud by Fay Richwhite or anyone else.

David Richwhite.
Fay Richwhite & Co Ltd,
c/o Goldman Sachs
International,
133 Fleet Street,
London EC4A 2BB.

LICENSED victualers who are "appalled" at the effect a smoking ban might have on trade might consider an alternative outcome. My wife and I have stopped going to pubs because of the smoke. We rarely go to restaurants. An effective change in the law would, I suspect, bring back a whole crowd of old friends who can't or won't take it any more.

John Whiting.
12 Hutchings Walk,
London NW11 6LT.

DOUBTLESS you wil be inundated with letters from owners of Christmas trees bought well before 1967 (Letters, December 22). Our own tree dates from my father's childhood, and, since he was born in 1914, it must have been made just after the first world war. Curiously, the branches appear to be made of feathers, dyed green and twisted around.

Catherine Sheldon.
11 Eden Close,
Rainhill, Prescot,
Merseyside L35 0ND.

I AM sitting in front of an artificial Christmas tree which has given pleasure to my brother and me, my three children and my eight grandchildren and countless other friends and relations. Purchased in 1930 when I was nearly a year old, it was passed on to me by my parents when I married. As the years have passed nearly all the baubles have had to be replaced and the tree seems smaller compared with my childhood memories of it. The question now is: who will survive the longer, the tree or me?

Alan T Kendall.
23 Coverdale Road, Fairfield,
Stockton-on-Tees,
Cleveland TS19 7EA.

New deal for fishermen

SCIENTISTS have recommended 45 per cent cuts in next year's fish catch to preserve a critical quantity of native fish of various species. This is an investment policy. Yet these cuts have been moderated, by EU negotiation, in view of the disaster they would mean for the fishing industry (EU fish talks will please no one, December 22).

The cuts are too small to aid Europes' ailing stocks significantly — yet are too large to help the industry here.

British fishing has been neglected for too long by the Government. Why should fishermen pay the price for nature's uncertainty and be used as a pawn in the Government's Euro-sceptic game? It is time for the Government to back Britain's fishermen and secure a realistic future for both fish and fishermen.

Britain needs a smaller, more flexible fleet to take advantage of years of abundant fish, yet one which can be rapidly streamlined during lean years. Why are fishermen not compensated for quota cuts? Why can fishermen not have a "set-aside" policy similar to that in the Common Agricultural Policy?

No wonder fishermen want out of the Common Fisheries Policy, when they are the most conservation-minded, yet face possibly the most rigorous enforcement and monitoring system in Europe. The confidence of the industry must be gained by demanding stringent policing of non-UK vessels in our waters.

Nicholas Dulvy.
Population Biology Sector,
University of East Anglia,
Norwich,
Norfolk NR4 7TJ.

SO, Tory Euro-sceptics have criticised the Government for "not doing more to protect British fishermen's rights" (Tory rebels humble Major, December 20). It is high time they cottoned on to what most of us have understood for a very long time: that the promotion of the enterprise culture (institutionalised greed to you and me) adds up to the wholesale abandonment of the rights of the common man and woman.

Frank Paice.
The Laurels, Shelfanger,
Diss, Norfolk IP22 2DG.

IF OUR fish stocks are so low, and British fishermen so desperate, why have we 20 Russian factory ships anchored in Weymouth Bay for the winter and loaded daily by British trawlers with fish from all over our western approaches?

D A E Cross.
20 Coldharbour Lane,
Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 7BY.

IN THE discussions on fisheries policy, there has been little mention of subsidies. Worldwide, they total some $54 billion per year in support of a global fish catch worth $70 billion, yet costing $124 billion. These subsidies have proved the single most substantive factor in the gross over-harvesting of 13 of the world's 17 major fisheries, leading to the unemployment of 100,000 fishermen. In the EU, these subsidies are "only" $580 million, though a seven-times increase since 1980 — a period when fish stocks have been declining faster than ever. Why not use the subsidies to retrain those fishermen who are going to lose their jobs anyway, whether through rationalised policy (primarily reduced harvesting) or through the commercial demise of remaining fish stocks?

Norman Myers.
(Honorary Visiting Fellow,
Green College, Oxford.)
Old Road, Headington,
Oxford OX3 8SZ.

Letters to the Editor may be faxed on 0171 837 4530 or sent by post to 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER, and by e-mail to letters@guardian.co.uk. Please include a full postal address and daytime telephone number. We may edit letters for clarity and concision.

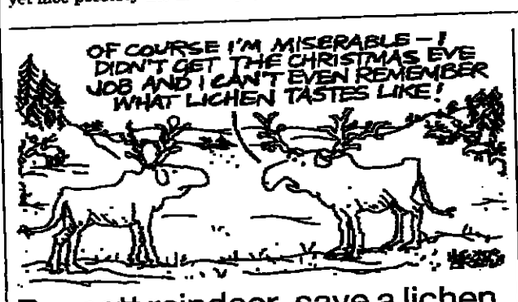
Liverpool 1, Manchester 0

THERE is a solution to the problems facing Manchester Airport (Greens press to re-open runway inquiry, December 22). There is existing capacity in the North-west to provide travellers, both business and leisure, with the services they need. Manchester could double the numbers it serves on its existing runway, as is the case at Gatwick, and the under-utilised capacity at Liverpool could be enhanced with new terminal facilities to allow the North-west to handle a further 12 million passengers a year by 2030.

The implications of Liverpool's development would be for an additional 30,000 jobs and would provide a catalyst for regeneration in Merseyside and the wider North-west in line with Government views on regional airports.

Liverpool Airport's development plans were also subject to a public inquiry and the then Transport Secretary, Brian Mawhinney, said he hoped to announce his decision on Manchester and Liverpool simultaneously. Any delay to the decision on Manchester should not prevent Liverpool from implementing its proposals at the earliest possible date.

Rod Hill.
Managing Director,
Liverpool Airport plc,
Liverpool L24 1YD.



Boycott reindeer, save a lichen

DID they tell John Henley (Tasty Rudolph gets a roasting, December 21) about the impact of the reindeer on the ecology of nothern Finland? Probably not. The lichens which used to be the main part of the reindeer's diet in winter have largely disappeared and supplementary winter feeding has often to be resorted to.

There are still some lichens in southern Finnmark, north Norway, but they are mainly in an isolated national park adjacent to the border. As it is likely that birch seedlings will be grazed out by the reindeer, in many places the vegetation of the future will be very different, more grassy, than that found now.

Where there are too many reindeer, the thin and fragile soils can be severely damaged too, as is happening in Finnmark — especially along fences built to manage the herding of the reindeer. Even if the reindeer were removed now, in the harsh Arctic climate it may take many decades or centuries for the extremely slow-growing lichens to regenerate, and for lichens and mosses to grow and protect the soils.

In Finnmark, reindeer have increased by a factor of two since the late 1970s, and in some places by a factor of three. That is why the lichens, too, have disappeared over much of northern Finnmark — they have been trampled out — and why soil erosion has been initiated. The increase in the number of reindeer in Finnmark may also explain why the prices for reindeer meat have gone down.

Robert Evans.
1 Wentworth Road,
Cambridge CB4 3PN.

An invitation to the Party

IT IS good to know that whatever possessed the Russians to vote for the Communists had nothing to do with their desire to see them back in power (Voting against the present, not for the past, December 19). That's such a relief. The vote was a "bread and butter issue"; a vote against the speed of reform; simply a protest vote. Anything but a vote of confidence for the Communist Party.

Poor, simple Russians not to know that the best way of keeping out the dreaded Communists is not to vote for them. But give them time. After all, with frequent elections, eventually the Russian people will get it right, whereupon we shall all breath easily again.

Norman Jarvis.
1 Den Brook Close,
Wellswood, Torquay TQ1 3TP.

THE Tories were splendidly united in their support for free expression in New Russia after the fall of the Soviet state. I wonder if we will see similar unity of thought and support for the democratic decision of the New Russian people, and seek to pressurise Mr Yeltsin to step down in favour of the clearly stated wish of the people via the ballot box, and recognise a Communist Party government of that land.

Keith Rayne.
54 Bowfield Road,
Sheffield, S Yorks S5 6LP.

DIDN'T somebody tell the Russians that Mrs Thatcher had destroyed Communism?

Neil Blewitt.
74 Fairfield Drive,
Attleborough,
Norfolk NR17 2HE.

Foreign field forever England

AS the MEP who obtained the specific ruling from the European Commission allowing Manchester City to play their four "foreign" players on Saturday, I was perplexed by your article "Clubs pick and mix" (December 23).

The "foreigners" rule has not changed, it's still three plus two affiliated players, ie those with more than five years' residence. What has changed is the definition of foreigners, to bring it in line with the Treaty of Rome, as we all knew it would. Foreign players are now those who do not have the citizenship of an EU member state, or that of one of the states of the European economic area (namely Norway, Iceland or Lichtenstein).

Similarly, assimilated status will be acquired by five years' residence in the EU rather than any specific member state. Your reporter places Berg, Bollinen, Bjornbye, Fjortoft, Leonahardgen (all Norway) and Bergsson (Iceland) in the wrong category, plus all those whose EU residence is more than five years, even if it is less in England.

Glyn Ford MEP.
46 Stamford Road,
Mossley,
Lancs OL5 0BE.

MANCHESTER City's goals do, at face value, appear expensive (City fans dig deep to cover price of strike, December 22). Unfortunately, however, the researcher Francis Hesketh has fallen into the classic economic trap of the 1980s by confusing cost and value.

The true worth of each and every City goal must be viewed against their quite dreadful start to the season and the subsequent climb from the relegation zone.

To my mind, £12 to share this renaissance (the cost of my ticket in the new Kippax stand at Maine Road for the Christmas match against Chelsea — "lower tier with a good view") represents true value for money.

Jon B Grantham.
26 Leighton Road,
London W13 9EH.

A Country Diary

STRATHDEARN: Sightings of golden eagles are more often than not by sheer chance and such was the case in the middle of December when I had gone into a strath to look for wild goats and mountain hares. I had seen nothing on the seven-mile drive up the strath because the low winter sun reflected off the bonnet of the car as I drove through iced surface water. Parking on the bank of the River Findhorn, I used both binoculars and telescope to try and find goats and mountain hares, all to no avail. The goats could easily have been elsewhere on the steep slopes, partly covered with scree, but there should have been mountain hares, and, as the snow only lay on the high tops, they would have been conspicuous in their white winter coats. I walked to the nearby bridge to listen for the winter song of a dipper, but then there was a movement to my left and there was a golden eagle hunting over the open moorland and grassland. It was an adult and the broad wings with the primaries jutted out like fingers as it circled, slowly drifting away to the hillside. It was one of those sightings that makes the hairs on the back of my head tingle, and this is often the case on seeing such a bird. The goats were further down the strath — 14 of them grazing amidst the scree — and the tribe consisted of two old billies and nannies with this year's kids. The oldest billy was silvery and black and, judging by the ridges on the horns, it was about eight years old. As for the mountain hares, it took a great deal of searching before I found one high on the hillside, and almost on the skyline. Normally this strath has hundreds of mountain hares and the sighting of only one must mean that the population has crashed. This is not unusual in some mammals, including mice and voles, and, although research has been carried out on these peaks and troughs, we still do not really know why it happens.

RAY COLLIER

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الاصل

Diary

Matthew Norman

WHEN yesterday we left the Diary Awards Luncheon at the Savoy, Lord Wyatt of Weeford had recovered from a walnut-induced choking fit and was eating a tangerine. Alas, the dear old boy had forgotten to peel it, and suffered an immediate relapse. However, even as he was being removed by stretcher, a call was made to Canary Wharf, and his place was swiftly taken by Gentleman Charlie Wilson, acting editor of "Independent". When the other judges — sane and rational Paul Johnson, genial Michael Winner and caring Esther Rantzen — and unofficial observer Boris the Jackal Johnson had welcomed him, and once Taki-George had been sent out for a decent dessert wine, I called the meeting back to order. Here are the further results of the Diary jury.

THE John Prescott Cup for Clarity of English. John Birt will receive this prize on behalf of the BBC, which in June advertised in its house bulletin, Ariel, for a "Corporate Breakthrough Adviser". Under the heading "skills and experience", the BBC claimed to be looking for someone who would: "support the existing network of advisers and facilitators; facilitate individual teams; deliver adviser and facilitator training; build awareness of the value and successes of Breakthrough." Gentleman Charlie asked permission to add a word of personal commendation. He said: "Bollocks."

THE David Icke Green Beret for Services to the Environment. Michael Fabricant MP, High Constable of the City of Lichfield, was the panel's unanimous choice. Without being able to identify the endangered species precisely, the judges recognised his contribution to conservation by allowing that creature to continue living on his head.

THE John Pilger Award for Campaigning Journalism. Jeremy Paxman was selected for spearheading the campaign to keep Linda the Tea Lady at the BBC. Linda, you may remember, was threatened with the sack when her sixth-floor canteen was "streamlined", on the grounds that her "customer care skills" were poor. Mr Paxman's rearguard action, led by a 400-signature petition, saved her job.

MYSTIC Meg's Crystal Ball for Soothsaying. When Paul Johnson nipped out to ask after a further bottle of Marsala, Esther Rantzen proposed the historian himself. She cited his uncanny prediction that Colin Powell would become the next US President, which appeared in the Spectator on the very day the General pulled out of the race. However, the prize went instead to Channel 4 Racing presenter Derek Thompson (45). TV Thommo's gallant second in the two-runner Great Tipster Stakes is an achievement the judges felt they could not justly ignore. (Steptoe, the year-old West Highland terrier who beat him, was disqualified due to Diary connections.)

THE Roy Hudd and Emu Ventriloquist Bursary. The winners are Holborow and Oswald. Jonathan Holborow, the former shepherd who edits the Mail on Sunday, has been working with his handkerchief Oswald for years (at times of stress, he presses the hankie to his face for a chat), but only in 1995 did the pair explode into the limelight. Charlie Wilson remained unconvinced. "There may be a future for ventriloquist-and-dummy double acts," he said, "but I canna sodding see how Oswald's gonna be able to work Holborow's mouth."

THE Inspector Clouseau Pewter Mug. The prize goes to the staff at the New Zealand police station in whose canteen this sign appeared: "Will the person who took a slice of cake from the commissioner's office return it immediately. It is needed as evidence in a poisoning case." Esther added a rider, warning that contaminated food products can be dangerous, and Charlie Wilson said: "Cobblers."

IT WAS at this point that things turned nasty. Esther Rantzen's accurate head-butt to Gentleman Charlie's nose proved the catalyst for a free-for-all in which only Paul Johnson, who had slipped out for a bottle of Madeira, escaped injury. Michael Winner and Taki-George became locked together in a two-way Boston Crab, and when the Jackal himself was floored by the power of Esther's combination punching, I felt obliged to call the Diary Awards Luncheon to a close. Our sincerest thanks to all concerned.

The familiar shape of things to come

Commentary

Will Hutton

THESE are ambiguous times. There is great change, but there is also remarkable continuity. Technological improvement, for example, may be carrying on relentlessly — but the great technological transformations that have characterised the 20th century have slowed down. It's all different; but it's all the same.

The fashionable consensus is that we live in an era of globalisation, the information revolution and earth-shattering change. The financial markets rule economic policy, nation states have little autonomy, and technology is transforming our lives. We have to embrace the market and new technology or we are dead.

Change is indeed a condition of the 20th century; but there is another side of the story. Arguably we live in an era of remarkable technological stability, in which nation states retain great scope for individual action. International production and trade have only recently matched the proportional scale they attained before the first world war; and in terms of international migration, new and tighter controls mean that men and women are more tied to the country in which they were born than at any time this century. Stable times indeed.

As for technology, what is striking about the pace of technological advance is how steady it is; besides the great leaps that characterised the first half of the century, it's possible to view the change that confronts this generation as the least transforming of this century. That is not to underestimate the advance represented by, for example, the desktop computer, the CD-Rom or the mobile phone, but rather to point to the wide range of technologies — from the aeroplane to the TV — which are broadly the same as 30 years ago.

Our great-grandparents had to deal with the change from the horse economy to the motorised world of the car, aeroplane and mass production — and our grandparents to the world of radio, TV and the revolution that brought machines from the refrigerator to the vacuum cleaner into the home. Beside all that, the internet, on which much of the case for great technical change rests, is small beer.

To grasp our technological stability, consider how silly those 1960s and 1970s futurologists' predictions now look. In the year 2000, we were told, travel to work would be in supersonic trains with commuters in space suits, all food would be powdered, books and newspapers would have ceased and there would be settlements in outer space. And yet the futurologists were simply extending the breathtaking pace of technological change which had characterised the first half of the century into the second.

Much of the evidence for current change now depends on the internet and the information superhighway — yet these are remarkably untransforming. Yes, we can send messages to one another and visit web sites around the world, and we will be able to do everything from working to shopping from our domestic work station; but that hardly matches those earlier transformations.

Take the much vaunted capacity to shop via the internet. Turn on the computer, wait interminably for the handshake as the modem connects with your "gateway" (it's often engaged) and click your mouse through all the instructions to visit the supermarkets' web site (which almost none has yet developed, although the supposition is they will). Order your week's shopping, and the total is automatically deducted from your account. Then the groceries can be delivered to your home. Fantastic!

Except that the technology to achieve all that is available now; its called phoning the grocer. Most supermarkets already run services in which you can phone and order your shopping; give them your credit card number and the transaction is complete. For a charge they will deliver. It's less time-consuming than using the internet; and you have the opportunity to explore gaps in your knowledge by talking to the person on the other end of the line. The internet may ultimately streamline the process — but is this as transforming, for example, as the extension of car ownership to millions in the 1950s who a generation earlier would have gloried in the possession of a horse?

In fact, much current technical progress is less about creating seismic changes to the way we live, than upgrading and cheapening the range of technology we already have. The TV, the phone, the car, the jet aeroplane, the refrigerator, and even the humble light-bulb are all ancient and basic 20th-century technologies, but they are being continually improved, cheapened, and thus extended to ever more people. This is excellent and greatly to be welcomed; but it does not constitute a technological *revolution*. Indeed, in some areas which we thought had been conquered by science — notably some of the killer viruses — the gains are proving less secure than we imagined.

> Consider how silly those 1960s futurologists' predictions now look

Nor are national cultures, economies and polities as porous before the march of the international marketplace as the consensus insists. Advertisers find that global adverts don't have universal appeal, just as global TV companies find that there is not an insatiable worldwide demand to watch reruns of I love Lucy, or Sergeant Bilko. Even tastes in pornography, that trusty fall-back for building national audiences, vary between cultures.

In the economy, the latest evidence is that multinationals are deglobalising their production and pulling back into their home regions. Even the all-powerful financial markets are ultimately rooted in national economies with their national quirks and preoccupations.

And the political community represented by the nation state remains the firmest building block of political, economic and diplomatic action — even if its power is constrained. In any case, sovereignty and autonomy of action have always been muddy, compromised concepts. They are certainly muddier and more compromised in the 1990s than they ever were — but to compare today's imperfect sovereignty to some golden age is to traduce the past.

But it is not all a story of continuity jostling with change. There is one revolution which has quickened its pace over the 20th century, and which promises to accelerate: the relationship between men and women. If much of the political and technological landscape is similar to that of 30 years ago, here the terrain is convulsed with change and fissures — with dramatic implications for the family, the household, work, and the welfare state.

Those futurologists of 30 years ago were doubly wrong — the powdered food they thought would replace natural food was going to be prepared by women, and space was to be conquered by men. No such assumption would be possible today; and it is the scale of that revolution by which claims for any transformation — in technology or in the economy — should be judged.

Planning the party to end all parties

Ros Coward

ONE seasonal trauma over, another about to begin. After the strains of Christmas come the worries about whether you'll have a New Year's Eve party to go to, and whether you will have a good enough time when you get there. But even then you won't quite be ready to relax. Isn't it time you started worrying about what you'll be doing on the eve of the millennium? There are only four years to go — so it is not a moment too soon to start planning.

New year is a problem at the best of times. Christmas celebrations over, we begin the slide into the darkest days of winter. Then along comes that calendar date without any obvious ritual significance, and we have to crank up again. We feel we ought, at the very least, to be doing *something* with *somebody*.

Yet in our unregulated free market, invitations are haphazard. The supply is sometimes scarce, sometimes excessive; and you often end up feeling you are in the wrong place.

New year's parties can be uncomfortable. Come the midnight hour, you can find yourself with people you don't want to be with. For all the artifice, the changing of the years brings complicated feelings: both a sense of ending, and anticipation bordering on fearfulness. It is that vague anxiety which propels us to seek company; but the aggressively positive way in which some react can be disconcerting.

If an ordinary New Year's Eve brings discomfort, what will the millennium be like? It is awaited by religions and astrologers the world over; even the irreligious will be unable to avoid the sense of ending which our Christian cultures attach to the Big One.

Many religious groups, including the Seventh Day Adventists, believe the world will end by the year 2000. This is consistently the date offered by apocalyptic prophecies. Nostradamus predicts Armageddon for 1999, heralded by pestilence, famine and natural catastrophes, followed by the second coming in 2000.

The idea of the resurrection of the living Christ is widespread in Christianity. And though it sounds pleasant, if portentous, it too is doom-laden, usually linked with the Day of Judgment when the righteous will be called and the rest perish.

Some people are optimistic about the 21st century — usually popular astrologers and Jungians. They predict 1,000 years of peace with the consolidation of humanism in the Age of Aquarius. But as 2000 approaches, even the astrologers glimpse approaching doom: many attach great significance to the fact that in August 1999 the planets will form a cross in the signs of Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius.

These signs, interpreted as corresponding to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, have led some, including influential Japanese scientists, to link the configuration to the coming of Armageddon. At the very least they predict extreme unrest, violence, natural catastrophes (especially earthquakes) and major geographic realignments.

By December 31, 1999, we'll know one way or the other about that one. Many groups will be down on their knees awaiting the fateful midnight. And where will we be? Surely not waiting for an invitation to a cosy do round the corner? Besides, who would organise such an event when there will be people out on the mountain-sides waiting for Armageddon?

Or will we unbelievers try to be in the right place by looking for the definitive non-religious public event that sums it all up? Maybe that's what all the money is really being thrown at. Yet judging from the Millennium Commission's lack of inspiration, it might welcome the end of the world to save it from its problems. Are we really going to feel in the right place watching a fireworks display or a Disney-style light show, when in our hearts we are expecting volcanoes to erupt in Hyde Park or a tidal wave to engulf the coast?

Perhaps we should make more extreme plans now. So far I've heard plans to rent a whole village, or to fly on Concorde, greedily getting two bites at the fateful hour. Travelling might be a good idea. The numerical significance of the millennium is lost on vast swathes of the world's population. For the Chinese it wouldn't be the new year; Judaism passed 2000 long ago; Islam won't have got there yet. Holidaying in Beijing or Baghdad might work if Armageddon was post-modern, selectively striking down Christian cultures alone.

Perhaps we should console ourselves with Eric Hobsbawm's suggestion that the 20th century has already ended. From this perspective, the real time to celebrate the new millennium would have been the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of new world disorder. Then our only problem would be that we had definitely missed the right party. But then, even those who were there missed its true significance.

As another turbulent parliamentary year draws to a close, **Simon Hoggart** presents his awards for the best and worst performances: the greasers, the turncoats, and the speeches in not-quite-English

Year of the partial emu

AS THE year ends, here are my parliamentary awards for 1995, chosen by a large and distinguished panel of judges:

Worst apology of the year

JERRY WIGGIN, the Tory MP who had tabled amendments to a bill in another MP's name. He said his actions had been "at odds with the proper expectations of the House", which is like saying, after you have drunk all the brandy, peed in the fireplace and made a pass at his wife, that your behaviour had been "at odds with the proper expectations of my host".

Worst speech of the year

JACK STRAW, torn to shreds like a hare caught by beagles when he tried to force Michael Howard out of office over prison conditions. Runners-up: DAVID DAVIS, whose feeble bleatings in the debate on a European referendum finished for years all the talk about him being next leader of the Tory party. And MICHAEL PORTILLO, whose conference rantings about the SAS had the same effect. But perhaps that was the plan. Who on earth would want the job now? Even Michael Heseltine seems to have stopped caring.

Biggest anti-climax

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSIONS. Heralded at the time as the greatest constitutional innovation since the Protectorate, they are now miniature bore-ins, devoted to landfills and the like. To say they are attended by a tiny handful of MPs would be to exaggerate their pulling power.

Makeover of the year

JOHN REDWOOD, variously described before June as a "Vulcan" and "the Don with the luminous nose", he turned himself into a good-humoured, affable loony, who seems to be on television all the time, like Tony Slattery.

Most misleading job title

BRIAN MAWHINNEY, so accident-prone he makes his predecessor Jeremy Hanley seem a safe pair of hands, is officially Minister Without Portfolio. To prove it, he has a smart new portfolio, marked "Minister Without Portfolio".

Tory Central Office now has the feel of a dated BBC sitcom. "The show where anything can happen — and probably will! This week, sparks fly when Brian releases the text of a speech which was never made . . ."

Best debater

Without doubt, ROBIN COOK. Labour's foreign affairs spokesman knows instinctively that a partisan speech is like judo: you have to use your opponent's blundering weight against him. Or he is a skilful matador, who wants the bull to be faster and heavier because it makes his job easier.

Professor Stanley Unwin Award for making yourself understood in a language close to, but different from, English

JOHN PRESCOTT. On private financing: "we were talking about this dispatch box when they said we couldn't have!" Or: "that has always been our case, always our problem we address ourselves to!"

Special award for worst Labour speaker

JOHN CUNNINGHAM. Jack Straw may have made the worst speech, but Cunningham's tone of high moral outrage about things which don't matter much, coupled with stillness when they do, gives him a degree of enviable consistency. One small sampler: "This government has withdrawn the bootlaces from the boots of truth, in this case." It's the last three words which give the whole sentence its piquant banality.

Worst Tory Cabinet minister

MICHAEL HOWARD. The Home Secretary is at his most strident and determined when he resolves to tackle matters which he should have resolved years ago: "Tackling the drug problem in our prisons is a difficult task. We cannot allow prisoners to deflect us from that task!"

Greatest loss

NICHOLAS FAIRBAIRN. With his voice like a lust-crazed corncrake, the tartan pyjamas he sewed himself to wear in the Chamber, his outrageous rudeness to Edwina Currie, his baroque love-life, and his hollow silver-topped cane full of whisky, he cannot be replaced. His annual speech against capital punishment was brilliant, and, because he never took it on TV, could be word for word the same, every time.

Biggest loser

NORMAN LAMONT became in March the first former Chancellor in memory to vote against his own government, so ending any chance of finding another seat for a year at least and possibly for ever. It is strongly denied that Mr Lamont was drunk at the time, though having seen his merry demeanour, I would dearly like to buy a case of whichever mineral water he'd been on.

Turncoat of the year

Not Alan Howarth, but JOHN HORAM, the *only* MP this century to have sat in the House for three different parties. Indeed he is one of the very few remaining MPs to have held office in a Labour government. Last summer he was promoted to the giddy heights of deputy to the deputy of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Greasers of the year

These are too numerous to mention, but special congratulations are due to JAMES CLAPPISON and CHERYL GILLAN who, after years of being so oily you could fry chips in their sweat, were both promoted to junior office. And of course, this category would not be complete without a tribute to MICHAEL FABRICANT, who took sycophancy to record heights by complimenting agriculture minister Angela Browning on her slim figure.

Daftest suggestion of the year

ELIZABETH PEACOCK, who called for public floggings of young hooligans to be broadcast live, on TV, during the National Lottery draw. Thus families could sit together round the television on a Saturday night and enjoy the fun and excitement of watching all the balls drop at once.

Majorism of the year

There were many, and the field was thrown open by his discovery of that exciting new European beast, the "partial emu". (Even whole emus can't fly; no doubt we'll find the partial one won't walk either.)

Often they depend on the use of convoluted, dessicated language to describe intensely emotional issues, such as his declaration that "terrorism is *unpleasant* and should be resisted". Or, on Bernard Manning's racist jokes: "I certainly think that people should avoid giving offence to people who are on the receiving end of those expressions, and I believe that is true of Mr Manning and everyone else." This was translated by the papers as: "Major lashes Manning".

Usually, however, Majorisms inhabit a twilight world somewhere between common sense and surrealism. As when he told Labour's Alastair Darling (the topic was some report or other): "I see from looking at your face that all you have read is the Press Association extract!"

Or this, delivered with great brio, shortly before he took a trip abroad during the Aslef drivers' dispute: "All I can say is, it's a good job I'm not going to Australia by train!"

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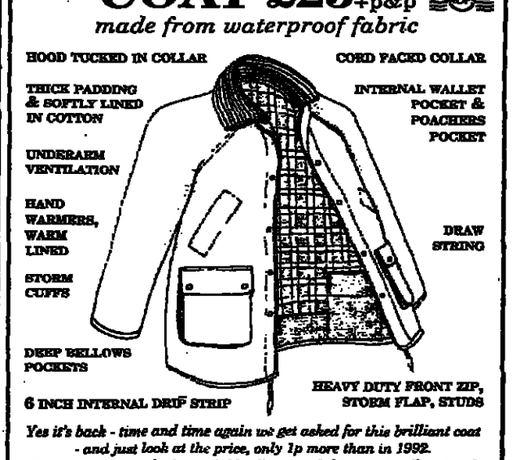

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Sugar war ends after workers accept deal, this page

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
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Finance Guardian

European consortium shares Philippine contract with Boeing in running battle for 'vital' Far East

Airbus splits £1.7bn order

Nicholas Bannister
Technology Editor

AIRBUS, the European plane-making consortium which lost a key Far East order to Boeing in November, is to share a $2.7 billion (£1.75 billion) order from Philippines Airlines with the US aircraft builder.

The European group was angered by Singapore Airlines' decision last month to order $12.7 billion worth of medium- and long-haul jets from Boeing, instead of splitting its orders between the two groups as in the past.

However it has won the lion's share of the contract to re-equip Philippines Airlines' (PAL) long-haul fleet. PAL is ordering eight 747-400 jumbo jets from Boeing and 24 medium- and long-haul jets from Airbus.

The PAL order is a shot in the arm for the European consortium which has sold few of its A340 and A330 jets, in competition with Boeing's new 777 plane.

The Philippines order, for delivery over the next three years, will bring much needed work for the consortium partners — British Aerospace, Aerospatiale of France, Daimler-Benz Aerospace of Germany, and Casa of Spain.

The decision to place the order with Boeing and Airbus will be a bitter blow for America's McDonnell Douglas, which had been hoping to win orders for its MD-80 plane — which seems to have been knocked out of the race fairly early on. Jaime Bautista, PAL's chief financial officer, said yesterday that MD had not been included in serious discussions.

Mr Bautista said that PAL planned to buy four A340-300s and eight A330-300s long-haul jets from Airbus. It was also ordering 12 A320s, the European consortium's rival to the Boeing 737 and the McDonnell Douglas MD-80 in the medium- to short-haul market.

The two big Far East orders come at a time when the civil aviation manufacturing industry is beginning to recover from recession. Paribas Capital Markets said earlier this month that it expected orders to exceed deliveries this year for the first time since 1991.

Nick Cunningham, an analyst with Barclays de Zoete Wedd, said: "Every order is becoming very important. The only real big orders are from airlines in developing countries that need additional capacity."

Mr Cunningham, quoted on the Bloomberg financial news service, said that Airbus has received about 100 orders for its long-range jets so far this year, slightly fewer than its production schedule allows.

He added that it was not yet clear how profitable the PAL order would be for Boeing and Airbus. "They may have simply made an offer that couldn't be refused," he said. "Most big deals this year were done at a discount of between 25 per cent and 45 per cent to list price."

Because of the Christmas holiday, no one was available at either Airbus or Boeing to break down the value of the order between the two groups.

Air travel is growing rapidly in the Far East. Mark Simpson, head of research at ING Barings in Hong Kong, forecasts annual growth of 10 per cent in passenger traffic for the next three years.

The next big Far East order is due from Malaysian Airlines, which said yesterday that it would announce a $4 billion order for 25 new aircraft in the new year. Boeing is expected to win more than half the order, mainly for its 747-400 jumbo jets.

ONE of the City's most striking landmarks is up for grabs. The Lloyd's of London insurance market has called in property consultants DTZ Debenham Thorpe to arrange the sale and leaseback of its Richard Rogers-designed Lime Street building. Lloyd's is said to be seeking offers in the region of £200 million for the building which cost £186 million when it was built during the 1980s. The move is part of Lloyd's restructuring plans which include the sale of assets. Last week, it sold Lloyd's List for £83 million.

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Former Fisons chief in frame to chair Orange

Paul Murphy

SPECULATION was growing yesterday that Stuart Wallis, the former chief executive of drugs group Fisons, has been approached as a potential chairman for Orange, the mobile phones group which is expected to be floated on the London market early next year.

Mr Wallis is understood to have been flooded with employment offers since Fisons was taken over by the Franco-American chemicals combine Rhône Poulenc Rorer in October.

After several years of corporate fumblings and persistent share price underperformance from Fisons, Mr Wallis was credited with turning it round with impressive speed, having joined the group less than two years ago.

A string of disposals, which stripped the group close to its pharmaceuticals core, and the subsequent takeover bid from Rhône Poulenc saw Fison's market worth more than double to £1.83 billion.

While none of his advisers would comment yesterday, Mr Wallis is reported to have been offered a high profile position in the service sector. But this would be a non-executive position, and the businessman is still said to be keen to take up a challenging "hands on" role elsewhere. A return to his former employer Rexam, previously known as Bowater, which has suffered two profit warnings recently, has been ruled out.

Meanwhile, it became clear that including share options and pension rights Mr Wallis could gross up to £2.5 million after his 16 months with Fisons. The terms of his two-year contract — at £315,000 a year — and performance-related bonuses should bring his basic payoff to around £750,000 — the exact terms being agreed with Rhône Poulenc just before Christmas. On top of this, Mr Wallis can expect pension rights of about £600,000, together with a profit of £1.2 million on options over 880,000 shares which were granted to the executive in November 1994.

Earlier this year, Hutchinson Telecom, the Hong Kong group which controls the Orange digital phones network, announced that a flotation would be sought sometime in 1996. British Aerospace has a 32 per cent stake in the business, which analysts believe may well be capitalised at more than £3 billion after the stock market sale.

Festive fillip for retailers

Lisa Buckingham

HEAVY spending by Christmas shoppers on luxury goods in the days leading up to the festive break is expected to lead to a modest rise in retail sales for December, the British Retail Consortium said yesterday.

The trade organisation said that retail sales are likely to rise at roughly the same pace as in November when growth was 4.3 per cent.

Despite the weak housing market which some shops said had dampened spending, anecdotal evidence from a sample of high street outlets suggests stronger sales in brand-name clothing, jewellery and watches.

This follows the Bank of England's latest 0.25 per cent cut in the base lending rate instituted half way through the month in an attempt to stimulate economic growth.

Firm figures from the retailers will not emerge until the middle of January but a vox-pop of companies, carried out by the Bloomberg news agency, appeared to suggest reasonable trading levels.

Jurek Piasecki, chairman and chief executive of the jewellery and watch chain, Goldsmiths Group, said that sales in the first 24 days of December rose by 8.7 per cent to £14.8 million compared with the 12 per cent rise during the corresponding period last year.

House of Fraser, the department store group, said sales were strong in cosmetics, perfumes and designer label clothing. Marks & Spencer said customers were particularly interested in food hampers, crockery and kitchenware rather than clothing.

Hugh Clark, a director of the British Retail Consortium, said: "Consumers are spending slightly more. They're not taking on a lot of extra debt and consumer confidence is not particularly high but we would expect to see a modest or reasonable increase."

Bitter sugar row ends

Mark Milner

SUGAR group Tate & Lyle has ended the bitter two-and-a-half year lock-out at its Staley plant in Decatur, Illinois, after workers voted to accept the latest pay and conditions deal.

Union officials said that the package accepted by the workers — after a two-day ratification vote — did include some concessions, though the union, the United Paperworkers International (UPIU), did not back acceptance.

Commenting on the end of the dispute, the UPIU's regional director Glenn Goss said: "Although there was no way I could recommend this contract, the majority of union members have spoken."

The dispute, which saw a Methodist minister chain himself to Tate & Lyle's London headquarters building earlier this year in protest against the company's action, was triggered by plans to more than halve the 762 strong workforce and to change the shift patterns for the remaining workers.

According to the UPIU, the new contract means improved severance terms for the employees who are being made redundant and modifications to the original proposals for a rotating 12-hour shift system.

Employees will return to work next month, replacing workers hired by Tate & Lyle during the dispute. The union said it would continue its legal action against the company and would help to fund union members who took their cases against being made redundant to arbitration.

Tate & Lyle acquired Staley, which makes cereal sweeteners, in 1988. Negotiations over the redundancy package and planned changes to working practices at the Decatur plant broke down in June 1993. The company then locked out the workforce.

Economics Notebook

The euro is on its way, like it or not

Victor Keegan

THE ARGUMENT over a single currency has been devalued by the false assumption that we have to make a national choice to get in or stay out. It is reported that Tony Blair will call a referendum before adopting the euro, while John Major won't, or can't, because his cabinet is split. But why does the whole nation have to be asked? There is a third scenario: that each of us can decide as individuals whether to use pound notes or euros.

Following the Madrid conference, it looks as though most bigger members of the EU will adopt the euro in line with a timetable that culminates in it becoming available in 2002.

What politicians in the UK haven't appreciated yet is that once the euro exists for the rest of Europe, it will be freely available here. Individuals can choose the single currency without the UK joining the monetary union. Those who want it can have it and those who don't want to needn't bother.

As soon as euros are available, most companies in the UK — especially the large ones which export most — will raise their new loans in euros and convert many existing ones. A strong currency is just what they have been looking for, ever since they realised the ecu wouldn't become a Euro currency. From day one the euro will be the corporate currency — even if the UK stays out of monetary union. It will also be the currency in which farmers are paid subsidies (ditto the regions) and in which European civil servants are paid.

The UK's financial services industry will adopt the euro to sell insurance policies and mortgages throughout Europe as well as to attract current accounts. They will have to think "European", or German and French companies will be inviting us to take out euro savings accounts and mortgages just as surely as they are now selling us water and electricity.

ONCE financial services denominated in euros are available they could prove exceedingly popular to people looking for a hedge against inflation — and particularly for the millions who travel to Europe every year on holiday or on business.

When they take out a euro account, they will suddenly not only have their savings "safe" in a strong currency but they will also sidestep the costs associated with buying foreign exchange.

It won't be long before department stores and supermarkets start accepting plastic cards attached to euro savings accounts. By then they will be buying most of their imports in euros so it will be convenient as well as shrewd to take euros at the checkouts. How long will it be before the unions, which are far more in favour of a single currency than the politicians, start bargaining for euro-denominated wage increases?

By 2002 there will have been, in any case, dramatic improvements in the technology of electronic payments, which will greatly reduce both the commission and transaction costs of changing money. Even without British acceptance of a single currency, many of its benefits will reach the consumer anyway. Once these are attached to the euro, the possibilities become really interesting.

Of course, consumer benefits aren't the only, or even the main, reason why pro-Europeans want the euro. They expect it to deliver macro-economic stability. If the euro mimics the strength of the German mark, interest rates could be as much as two percentage points lower than otherwise — with all that that implies for industrial costs, investment, cuts in government interest payments and lower mortgages.

IF THE euro circulated freely as the UK's second currency, it wouldn't of course stop the possibility of a run on the pound. Sterling would still be the national currency. But it would insulate many people from the effects of a devaluation if their savings and even their salaries were denominated in euros. Indeed, if you took out a euro mortgage, you might want to be paid in euros too, to avoid having to pay back the capital later in life with devalued pounds.

The UK would, in effect, be turned into a two-tier economy — rather in the way that Poland was "dollarised" before its reform programme, when the dollar's value exceeded that of the national currency in which people had little faith.

The euroisation of the UK could result in either of two scenarios: either "good" money (the euro) will drive out "bad" money (the pound), at least for corporations and the chattering classes ... or the Government, determined not to let this happen, could adopt a fierce monetary policy designed to make the pound maintain its value on the foreign exchanges to stem the onward march of the euro.

The question would then arise: what is the point of being outside the single currency if all the levers of monetary policy were being used to simulate entry?

The point is not that the euro will inevitably ease out the pound, because nobody knows that it will. But the above-described scenario is a likely middle way between entry and exclusion, which hasn't even been discussed.

In the 1980s Nigel Lawson tried unsuccessfully to float the idea of a "hard ecu" which, it was hoped, would be adopted all over Europe by market forces. Inevitably it failed because everyone saw it for what it was: an economic ruse to solve a political problem. Now the UK may be faced with a "hard euro", whether we like it or not.

Phone networks forced to ring changes

OUTLOOK/Nicholas Bannister sees more upheavals ahead as telecom industry heads for sweeping regulatory reforms

TURMOIL, uncertainty and change will mark the UK telecommunications industry next year, particularly in the first six months as new management teams wrestle with the biggest regulatory reforms the industry has seen in five years.

BT starts the year with a new management structure and a new chief executive. Group managing director Michael Hepher is out. Officially, having sorted out BT's costs problems, mainly by reducing the workforce by nearly 100,000 people, he wants to return to financial services. In practice, he is tired of the frustrating business of running a company as tightly regulated as BT.

Some argue that he should have pushed for a tougher approach to the regulator. Even he admits that, with hindsight, BT should have forced a Monopolies Commission reference over the deflationary price regime.

His departure opens the way for BT to fall in line with the Cadbury code by separating the roles of chairman and chief executive, until now the sole preserve of Sir Iain Vallance.

Sir Iain remains executive chairman while an outsider, Peter Bonfield, previously at the Japanese-controlled ICL computer group, takes over as chief executive. How the jobs of the chairman, chief executive and managing director will be divided up between the two men has yet to be announced.

Optimists within the telecom industry hope that a fresh face at BT will mean a fresh approach to regulation. However the City expects that Mr Bonfield will take a much tougher line with the regulator, Don Cruickshank, the director general of Oftel. Mr Cruickshank is not a character easily bullied but open confrontation is unlikely to be beneficial.

Cable and Wireless, owners of Mercury, start the year on an even more uncertain footing. Both chairman Lord Young and chief executive James Ross were sacked in November after being unable to resolve their differences.

A former non-executive director has been drafted in as chairman while the board looks for a chief executive. Rod Olsen, the finance director, has been appointed acting chief executive, subject to shareholder approval of a change in the group's articles to allow a New Zealander, rather than a Brit, to run the show.

Tougher line . . . Bonfield

However Mr Olsen seems to have ruled himself out of the race since he is on the board sub-committee of three charged with finding James Young's successor. Mercury, C&W's domestic phone subsidiary, has new faces at the top following the ousting of Mike Harris as chief executive, and the resignation of his successor, Duncan Lewis, just nine months into the job.

The future of Energis, the owner of the third largest trunk network in the UK, is also uncertain. AT&T, the powerful US telecom group, considered making a bid for it more than a year ago but talks with its owners, the National Grid, came to nothing. Earlier this month the Grid was floated and Energis must look attractive to any large telecom group seeking to build up a big UK presence.

Ionica, the Cambridge-based group seeking to break BT's grip on the local phone network by substituting radio links for the last few hundred yards of copper phone line into almost every home and office, has just appointed a new chief executive to replace David Dey who quit after a quarrel.

The management changes come just as the UK industry has to resolve a host of regulatory issues raised by Mr Cruickshank and also when the global telecom industry is on the verge of big change. Most big European Union nations are committed to opening their telecom markets to full competition by 1998.

Just how each country is committed to open competition should become clear next year as each country's regulatory regime becomes apparent.

News in brief

Canary Wharf sale completed

The sale of Canary Wharf to the International Property Consortium was completed yesterday, over two years after lenders stepped in with a £1.1 billion rescue. No price was put on the sale. The European Investment Bank maintains its loans because of Canary Wharf's importance to Docklands and IPC takes on the £300 million pledge to London Regional Transport to complete the Jubilee Line extension.

BP's Sahara venture

British Petroleum yesterday confirmed plans for a £2.3 billion project to explore for gas in the Sahara Desert in a joint venture with Sonotrach, the Algerian state oil and gas company. Exxon, the US oil firm, may also open talks with the Algerian government for a natural gas contract.

Russian station deal

Taylor Woodrow has been given a contract, worth up to $150 million (£100 million), to build the St Petersburg high-speed rail station, the Interfax news agency in Moscow reported. The rail line will run to Moscow and the entire project is expected to cost up to $8 billion.

More job uncertainty

Fifty two per cent of Britain's employees expect their job will be less secure in the year ahead while almost three quarters expect to be under greater pressure at work, according to a TUC survey out today.

French initiative

The French government has announced new details of a series of measures designed to boost consumer spending after meeting union and employers' leaders last week. The stimulus was mostly in the provision of tax incentives for those taking money out of savings schemes.

Mercedes sales climb

Mercedes-Benz said sales this year will be up and the company expects further gains in 1996. Mercedes chief executive Helmut Werner said that sales this year should rise 2 per cent to DM72 billion (£32.3 billion).

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.03	France 7.37	Italy 2,420	Singapore 2.15
Austria 15.07	Germany 2.1600	Malta 0.54	South Africa 5.51
Belgium 44.25	Greece 365.00	Netherlands 2.4200	Spain 183.00
Canada 2.07	Hong Kong 11.83	New Zealand 2.32	Sweden 10.13
Cyprus 0.8950	India 54.42	Norway 9.58	Switzerland 1.73
Denmark 8.40	Ireland 0.94	Portugal 227.00	Turkey 87,705
Finland 6.67	Israel 4.89	Saudi Arabia 5.80	USA 1.5200

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

هكذا من الاصل

هكذا من الاصل

Rugby Union

Leicester 51, Barbarians 25

Richards helps Tigers run free

Robert Armstrong

LEICESTER overran the Barbarians with a hugely entertaining seven-try victory that served as an object lesson in expansive rugby yesterday at Welford Road. Two tries apiece by the Tigers' wings Rory Underwood and Steve Hackney must have brought a tear to the eye of England's coach Les Cusworth, who is finding it harder to achieve such spectacular results with the national side.

Underwood displayed vintage form of a type he has often shown in Five Nations matches against France, England's opponents in Paris next month. Hackney, an England A international with an astonishing turn of pace, earned the Man of the Match award, though any one of half a dozen Leicester players might have qualified for the gold trophy that was presented to him.

Indeed, no player exercised a more far-reaching influence on this free-scoring rout than England's discarded No. 8 Dean Richards. The Leicester captain completely confounded his stereotype as a strong man who only enjoys close-contact work; instead he demonstrated the all-round skills of a quarterback, sprinting 40 metres at one stage to tidy up a defensive lapse and distributing passes with dazzling sleight of hand.

If Richards's intention was to send the England selectors an explicit message on how to play the running game, he succeeded with a vengeance and greatly to the discomfort of the Barbarians. Neil Back, too, restated his case for an England recall with a dynamic display of decision-making on the open side that neatly complemented Richards, especially when the big man reverted to ball-winning mode.

It was a punishing lesson for the Barbarians, who must have fancied their chances after leading 10–3 and then 13–11 at half-time. Their lively half-backs Alex King and Andy Gomarsall enlivened the first half with a witty, inventive contribution that threatened to upstage the Tigers, before the hosts got themselves in the groove. The South Africa No. 8 Rudi Straeuli had the rare experience of being on the wrong end of a points deluge.

After the interval Leicester promptly moved up two gears and within a 19-minute period comprehensively destroyed the Barbarians with a magnificent haul of 35 points that included five tries. It had taken half the season for the Tigers to produce the flexible, handling game their coaches had promised but the spectacle was worth waiting for.

If Leicester can approach the same style when they travel to Bath for next week's Courage league meeting, that fixture may for once live up to its top-of-the-table billing.

However, despite their drubbing, the Barbarians received the best kind of Christmas present, a renewal of their sponsorship by Scottish Amicable; it will run for a further three years from next May, when the current contract expires.

Given that the Barbarians are contemplating a major break with tradition by paying their invited players, the new deal represents a financial lifeline that will allow the club to cope with the pressures of professionalism.

King pinned . . . the Barbarians fly-half is stopped in his tracks by Leicester's captain Dean Richards at Welford Road PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

SCORERS: Leicester: Tries: Underwood 2, Kardooni, Hackney 2, Richards, Back. **Conversions:** Harris 5. **Penalties:** Harris 2. **Barbarians: Tries:** Berek, Straeuli, Proctor. **Conversions:** King 2. **Penalties:** King 2.
LEICESTER: W Kilford; S Hackney, P Delaney, R Robinson, R Underwood; J Harris, A Kardooni; G Rowntree, R Cockerill, D Garforth, M Johnson, M Poole, C Tarbuck, D Richards (capt), N Back.
BARBARIANS: J Thomas (Llanelli and Wales); **D Loughead** (Toronto Welsh and Canada), **L Davies** (Neath), **G Shiel** (Melrose and Scotland), **W Proctor** (Llanelli and Wales); **A King** (Bristol Univ), **A Gomarsall** (Wasps); **M Mika** (Otago Univ and Western Samoa), **B Reidy** (Marist and Western Samoa), **D Luperne, R Berek** (both Dax), **G Fraser** (Pontypridd and Wales), **P Walton** (Newcastle Gosforth and Scotland), **R Straeuli** (Transvaal and South Africa), **I Morrison** (London Scottish and Scotland, capt).
Referee: D Bevan (Wales).

● Gloucester have signed the 25-year-old former England Colts centre Alastair Saverimutto from League Three Coventry.

Quotes of the year

The seagulls have landed

Robert Pryce presents the pick of his annual trawl

I can't believe I've got a hat-trick, especially against my old friend Bruce
Ronny Rosenthal after Spurs, two down at half-time, beat Grobbelaar six times in their FA Cup fifth-round replay

When the seagulls follow over the trawler, it is because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea
Eric Cantona to reporters outside the appeal court

I was clumsy with my head
Duncan Ferguson explaining to a Scottish court how he came to butt John McStay

We are planning a Super League, not a Sympathy League
Maurice Lindsay, Rugby League chief executive, on why there is no room in the new set-up for small-town teams

Perhaps I am a lone voice in the wilderness, but we are a backs to the wall club and always seem to get the rough end of the stick
Joe Kinnear, king of the mixed metaphor, after being sent from the dugout by referee Robbie Hart against Manchester United

Come crunch time we're a togetherness team
Coach Alex Dampier on ice hockey's double-winning Sheffield Steelers

We got on real good from the get go
Forward Chris Finch on basketball's double-winning Sheffield Sharks

'I think we have to be careful about using the word genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein'

If he beats us now I'll look like an idiot
Young America syndicate chief John Marshall on agreeing to allow Dennis Conner to compete in the defenders' final of the America's Cup.

If you have a snake at your feet I guess you should blow its head off
Marshall after Conner won; he then lost to New Zealand.

And how many men have you slept with in your life?
IAAF president Primo Nebiolo to Swedish TV reporter Britt-Marie Mattsson after she asked him about corruption allegations

I was incredibly shocked. I worked for 23 years as a foreign correspondent, and I've interviewed dictators and other nuts, but I've never met anyone who behaved like Nebiolo.
Mattsson's reaction

Allah has many names, but one of them is not Don King
Butch Lewis, big-fight promoter

There will be questions that will be answered, and in the answering of the questions people will be capitulated by the fancy of what's going on, the metabolism of men jumping, and the excitement will be in the air and growing with geometric proportions
Don King previews Mike Tyson's comeback fight against Peter McNeely

I'll eat breakfast with Elvis before that happens
Tommy Morrison estimates McNeely's chances of winning

He's got nothing I want, except a Harley-Davidson
Nigel Benn refuses a rematch with Chris Eubank

I think we have to be careful about using the word genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein.
Former Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theisman talking about Joe Montana

Mr Whelan is a god and our father in England
Roberto Martinez, Spanish midfielder, on the Wigan Athletic chairman

If I'm ever reincarnated, I'd like to return as a personality
Howard Wilkinson, the Leeds United manager

Maybe it's cowardice, maybe it's bravery, but after a sleepless night I took the decision to end this soap opera
Gianluca Vialli, upset by the coach Arrigo Sacchi, announces that he will not play for Italy again

I told my players they will be playing against 11 guys ready to fight for each other, not with each other
Spartak Moscow's coach Oleg Romantsev on Blackburn's Le Saux-Batty bust-up

They stood for family values
Brentford's manager David Webb explains why he attended Ronnie Kray's funeral

We don't know who Denis Compton is. He doesn't appear to be at Disney Studios or have anything to do with them.
Employee at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts after Sir Tim Rice thanked Compton in his Oscar acceptance speech

I'm glad they hadn't invented Spinvision in my day. It would have shown the ball coming out straight.
Vic Marks, former England off-spinner

I've heard it said that this game at Test level is 50 per cent in the mind, 50 per cent in the heart and bugger technique, and that's not far off the mark
Raymond Illingworth, chairman of England selectors

Devon has one great asset — his pace — but the rest of his cricket is a nonentity
England bowling coach Peter Lever on Devon Malcolm

It is a sign of decreasing self-esteem and increasing moral turpitude
Wes Hall, the West Indies tour manager and born-again Christian, on streaking

The mountain doesn't come to Moses
Arif Abassi, chief executive of Pakistan's cricket board, refusing Australia's offer to be cross-examined over its allegations against Salim Malik

The wives are in tears, the president is in tears, and several players are overcome. I saw the president with tears in his eyes, kissing the captain. I've got this on video. It's worth a fortune.
England's manager Jack Rowell after the World Cup win over Australia

It does seem ironic that, when I left, my place in the Welsh team was under threat but that, when I return at the age of 33, I seem to be a conquering hero
Jonathan Davies on joining Cardiff from Widnes

His nickname is Warren, as in Warren ugly bastard
Jason Leonard on his England team-mate Dean Richards

I don't know why youngsters take drugs anyway. Why don't they simply go down the pub and drink 10 pints of lager to get happy?
West Ham's Tony Cottee

It's very difficult when I go out. All the women want to shag with me.
Newcastle United's French international David Ginola

Rugby League

Embattled Saints face big day without dynamic duo

Paul Fitzpatrick

THE Rugby Football League will hold an inquiry early in the new year into the weakened side fielded by St Helens against Wigan at Central Park on Boxing Day.

St Helens, beaten 58–4 by Wigan, fielded a team made up largely of reserve and Academy players for a fixture which usually draws the biggest league crowd of the season. Seven members of their 17-man squad had no previous first-team experience.

Saints say they can provide medical certificates for all the absentees. Bobby Goulding, their scrum-half, did not require one as he was finishing a three-match suspension.

It remains to be seen how many of the absentees return for Saturday's Regal Trophy semi-final against Warrington. But clearly Saints do have problems.

David Howes, their chief executive, said yesterday that the left-wing pair of Paul Newlove and Anthony Sullivan, who have scored 36 tries between them this season, will be missing again and that Chris Joynt, one of the best back-row forwards in the business, is very doubtful.

Chris Morley, who played in the pack at Central Park, is also out of contention — for the rest of the season — after breaking his thumb.

Howes said that Newlove and Sullivan might even be doubtful for the Regal Trophy final, if Saints get that far. The club, he added, had been overtaken by the "exceptional circumstances" of an exceptional season, but the RFL had no choice but to hold an inquiry.

At the heart of the current problem is a misconceived Centenary Championship which has tried to squeeze too many fixtures into a truncated season. But it is hard to feel much sympathy for the clubs, since they agreed to it.

The players do deserve sympathy. What sort of state many of them will be in by the time Super League starts in March does not bear thinking about.

It may get even worse if the weather forces more postponements. Warrington must rearrange three of the remaining five league games and have no idea how to fit them in, particularly if the club reach the Regal Trophy final.

"We might have to ask Oldham, Workington and Halifax to play a composite side against us on the same night," said Brian Johnson, Warrington's coach. He was joking, but not when he added: "It's all too much, and we are paying the penalty of too many matches being arranged in a short season."

Meanwhile the League's director of marketing Mark Newton has warned that poor facilities could kill off Super League crowds. He said: "Stadia worry me. Soccer has led the way over the last decade and we need to catch up fast.

"For too long clubs have neglected grounds. It's a common problem for all club chairmen: should we buy a new player, or rebuild the toilet blocks?

"We know we can deliver a fantastic product on the field, but if a family of four come to watch a game and the two kids can't see from the terracing, or dad can't park his car easily, they won't come again."

Centenary-season crowds have dropped alarmingly after nine years of growth.

● The Australian second-row Andrew Schick has signed a two-year contract with Castleford. The 25-year-old forward was initially taken on for the short Centenary season after the Cas coach John Joyner saw him playing for the Brisbane club Redcliffe.

Sailing

Of whales, winds and seas like mountains

Bob Fisher gives a survivor's tale of the Sydney-Hobart Race. This year's event, steeped in drama, should finish today

ONLY an Englishman could have devised the Sydney-Hobart Race; to start a 630-mile ocean classic at midday on Boxing Day would have had the tacit approval of Noel Coward: John Illingworth, who proposed this event in 1945, was a Yorkshireman and canny enough to win the debut race.

To Australians he was probably "that bloody stupid pommy Naval officer", but he begat what is now an institution. This year just over 1,000 sailors are competing, ranging from billionaires to a handful who are unemployed; several have completed the course more than 25 times, suggesting either that the event has sufficient mystique to attract them back or that the post-race parties in Hobart are unbeatable.

It is one of the truly tough ocean races, where conditions can change in a twinkling and hazards are frequent. Whales can ruin your day, as they have for three boats this year. Peter Hansen's 55ft Future Shock is so badly damaged after colliding with one that she is bound for that regular race refuge, Eden.

Two years ago more than half the fleet made for the fishing port after a fierce Southerly Buster battered the fleet on the second night out of Sydney. The Fisherman's Club became an oasis where war stories were swapped as Andrew Strachan's 47ft Ninety Seven battled her way to Hobart to take line honours. Strachan will be keeping a weather eye on Eden this time because Ninety Seven is one of those damaged by a whale.

Also in 1993, John Quinn spent five hours in the water after being washed off his 35-footer as he steered in the huge and confused seas. It was dark all the time and he owed his survival to the vigilant rescue operation mounted by the organisers and to the million to one chance that he was picked up in the spotlight of a tanker called to assist the search-and-rescue team. Quinn is racing again this year, drawn like a moth to a candle flame.

All the time we awaited news of Quinn with trepidation, I recalled that I had seen two 15ft sharks swimming alongside our yacht in exactly that area only a couple of years earlier.

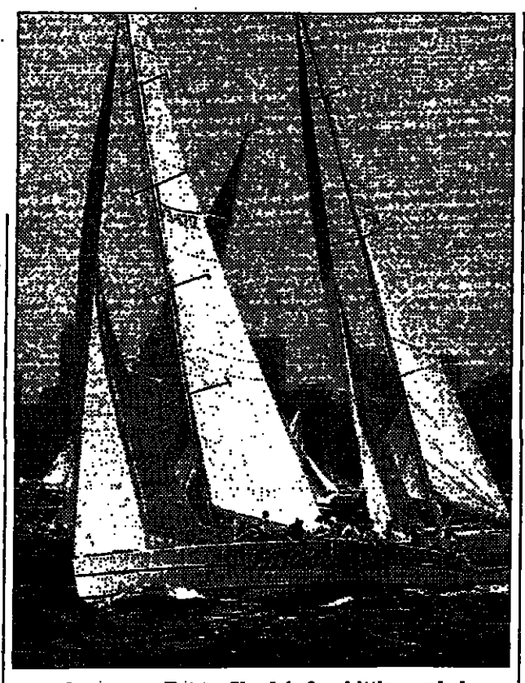
The real test comes this morning as the boats cross the treacherous Bass Strait, one of the emotional and physical challenges of this race. It was here in 1990, when aboard the 80ft Rothmans with Lawrie Smith and his crew, that I experienced rapid deceleration as we slithered down the face of one wave at close to 25 knots and speared the wave in front. Rothmans came up all standing, her stem six feet under water and the rudder tip just kissing the surface.

Water sluiced down the open companion hatch and back to where, at the wheel, the helmsman was waist deep. We were pushing the boat hard, trying to beat the record, pushing a bit too hard in 40 knots of wind and more.

The exhilaration of that sleigh-ride was unforgettable. Three of us were talking about it this Boxing Day as we watched the model yacht race on Setley Pond; we all knew where we would have liked to have been: out there doing it again.

It is a race, too, of tantalising agonies: one minute you are well inside record time, the next almost becalmed with not a hope of making Hobart before the pubs open. The target time to cross the finish line is 3.36am, but that might deny many Tasmanians an opportunity to greet the triumphant yacht.

But Storm Bay can be as quiet as a lamb, and the last 20 miles from the Iron Pot — an old navigation beacon that marks the mouth of the River Derwent — has changed the face of many a race. Some curse those last miles, but ever since Illingworth's day the race has finished at Battery Point. Jazz bands in boats and a crowd a dozen deep all along Elizabeth Street Pier climax this ocean classic, with perhaps a session in the Custom House Hotel; they are all part of the Sydney-Hobart tradition.



Thar she goes . . . Future Shock before hitting a whale

Wind shift kisses Sayonara's hopes goodbye

Bob Fisher

A SWITCH in the direction of the wind, from north-east to south, has probably put paid to the computer billionaire Larry Ellison's hopes of breaking the race record in Sayonara, which has Rupert Murdoch aboard.

The 79-footer was off Cape Howe after 25 hours, about one hour behind record schedule. Sayonara is the latest in carbon-fibre technology, but the handicap leader was Don Mickleborough's 36ft Southerly, built in more traditional materials in 1939, which has scored three major ocean-racing wins in the past 12 months.

Most attention yesterday was on the three yachts damaged after hitting whales. Peter Hansen's Future Shock struck one off Montague Island, damaging hull and rudder; the 55-footer, taking water, headed for the fishing port of Eden.

Andrew Strachan's 47ft Ninety Seven was also involved in a collision but told race control she would continue in the race. The 40ft King Billy reported that she had had "a brush with a whale" but likewise was carrying on. And the 50ft Yendys ran full tilt into a sunfish and sustained minor damage.

Ice Hockey

Top official sacked as Smiths are checked and Devils moan

Vic Batchelder

THE sacking of Bob Bramah as Referee In Chief for England overshadowed a Christmas period notably short on goodwill.

The holiday saw the former owners of Durham Wasps win an appeal but lose a role, and Cardiff Devils have their lead squeezed atop the Premier Division. Cardiff said yesterday they "had to complain" officially about the referee Graham Horner after they had three goals disallowed in their 6–5 Boxing Day win over Nottingham Panthers.

Bramah has reacted angrily to his dismissal on Friday by Nico Toemen, recently promoted to Technical Director by BIHA, who claimed the former police sergeant was responsible for a lack of "progress in developing officials [in England] to a satisfactory standard, despite high increase in expenses".

Bramah yesterday laid into "spineless" Toemen for not raising these matters at a meeting last week, and rejected outright the claims over expenses as the English IHA "pay £6,000 per season towards my services".

Meanwhile, if Wasps' former owners Tom and Paul Smith spent a happy Boxing Day thinking they had overturned the two-year ban imposed on them, the BIHA disabused them yesterday.

According to the BIHA, the bans have been only "suspended pending the liquidator's report [into] Incredo Limited [Durham Wasps' former holding company]. Meanwhile [the Smiths] can continue employment within the sport but not as a director, owner or with financial control of a club."

On the ice, Cardiff only scraped through 6–5 despite leading 6–1 after 34 minutes and a Steve Moria hat-trick against the third-placed Panthers. Sheffield's Tim Cranston scored five times as Steelers beat Panthers 8–6 before moving into second place with a 4–3 win at Basingstoke thanks to two goals from Tony Hand.

Cricket

South Africa v England: Fourth Test, second day

Russell rises as England slump

Mike Selvey
in Port Elizabeth

ENGLAND have called up reinforcements to the touring party for next month's one-day series, but it may be too late. On the evidence of yesterday's play, a match involving a South African XI against 22 of England would be a not-unequal contest.

Beginning the second day at 230 for four, a position near to parity, South Africa lost the potential centurion Daryll Cullinan for 91 inside the first half-hour but, with 49 from Brian McMillan, 84 from the wicketkeeper Dave Richardson and genuine supporting contributions down the order, they were not dismissed until an hour after tea, when Paul Adams on his debut was run out without scoring. An ordinary batting side had made 428 and might consider themselves hard done by not to have made a heap more.

It left England 20 overs to bat and the reply began inauspiciously. After Mike Atherton had negotiated Allan Donald's opening over, Alec Stewart angled his first legitimate delivery from Shaun Pollock to the third-man boundary but then hung his bat out at the next and was caught at the wicket.

Atherton and Jason Gallian were left to see out the day and duly did so, taking the score to 40 for one (Atherton 15, Gallian 14), although not without a searching examination from Adams.

With a new ball and four seamers to exploit it, convention would have dictated that the young spinner's first bowl in international cricket might have come at around 5.30 when play was due to finish. Instead, to the great delight of the crowd and the band in the stand, Hansie Cronje introduced him to the attack after seven overs.

With Gallian facing, it was a shrewd move; England's latest No. 3 had seen Adams bowl but only on Pakistan television with his A team-mates gathered around him ("the lads giggled a bit").

The bowler appeared in no way fazed. His first ball pitched in the right place and spun away, his third brought an impassioned lbw appeal, and in all he bowled seven overs, three of them maidens, for 15 runs, eight of them the result of a brace of full tosses which were dispatched unfussily by Gallian. Adams will cause problems and South Africa must regret not taking the plunge with him in Johannesburg.

England were awful, and the elder statesmen watching were already drawing a connection between the lack of focus on the field and the arrival of the pushchairs in the team camp. Much of the bowling bordered on tinpot, purveyed in friendly fashion by headless chickens, with the wickets yesterday shared by Dominic Cork, always willing, who finished with four for 113, and Richard Illingworth, who removed McMillan and Richardson and ended with three for 105, although it was not the sort of performance to send anxious South Africans rushing down to the television van to study him on video.

Of the seamers, the most culpable were the swing bowlers Mark Ilott and Peter Martin. On a slow pitch where driving anything other than a long half-volley never looked easy, they ought to have been giving the ball the opportunity to swing. If that basic is adhered to, scoring options are restricted to the front foot and, if the concentration is right, to one side of the wicket. Fields can be set. Instead both bowlers conceded runs on either side and, the cardinal sin, to back-foot strokes; both were cut to ribbons.

In such circumstances a captain cannot legislate and can be made to appear foolish. Despite it all Martin somehow contrived to emerge with the most economical figures; Ilott limped off midway through the afternoon session with a strain in his left thigh and is unlikely to bowl again in the match.

It was a departure that preceded the only controversial moment of the day when, five overs later, Richardson attempted a sharp single to the substitute fielder Mark Ramprakash at extra cover and his direct hit at the batting end appeared to have run out Pollock. It was desperately close and the third umpire, Rudi Koerten, needed some while to adjudicate. His decision in favour of the batsman did not seem consistent with the evidence.

But overall the bowlers, for all their faults, deserved better support than they found in the field. Six catches of varying difficulty went down, culminating in one farcical over towards the end of the innings when, in the space of four balls from Illingworth, Craig Matthews was missed by Graham Thorpe at cover and Donald was dropped twice, by Gallian at midwicket and then by the bowler himself.

Earlier Richardson, when 67, had been missed at slip by Stewart off Hick's off-spin, Illingworth had failed to cling on to a firm, low, return catch offered by Pollock, and Atherton, plunging away to his right at shortish midwicket, could not hold on to a mistimed leg-side hit by the same batsman off the same bowler. It was not easy, but one remembers his effort at short extra cover to remove Cronje on the first day; he sets his own standards and will not have liked that.

However, an exclusion clause should be placed on Jack Russell, who rose above the carnage to put in possibly his best performance for England behind the stumps, placing in perspective his world record at The Wanderers. He conceded no byes in the innings; he held four catches, of which two — a diving effort to dismiss Cullinan off Cork's wide loosener, and a wonderfully alert, athletic effort which involved plunging in front of Richardson as he got bat and pad to Illingworth — were exceptional; he stumped Matthews; he just avoided decapitation by Cork's scattergun throw from point; and he played the major role in Adams's run-out when he fielded Gallian's wild throw and diverted it on to the stumps. It was brilliant wicketkeeping and he at least could rest contented.

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA
First innings (overnight: 230–4)

D J Cullinan c Russell b Cork	91
B N McMillan c Russell b Illingworth	49
†D J Richardson c Russell b Illingworth	84
S M Pollock lbw b Cork	23
C R Matthews st Russell b Illingworth	15
A A Donald not out	12
P R Adams run out	0
Extras (lb11, nb8)	19
Total (159.5 overs)	428

Fall of wickets cont: 251, 326, 379, 408, 426.

Bowling: Cork 43.2–12–113–4; Ilott 28.4–7–82–1; Martin 33–8–79–1; Illingworth 39.5–8–105–3; Hick 12–1–32–0; Gallian 2–0–6–0.

ENGLAND
First innings

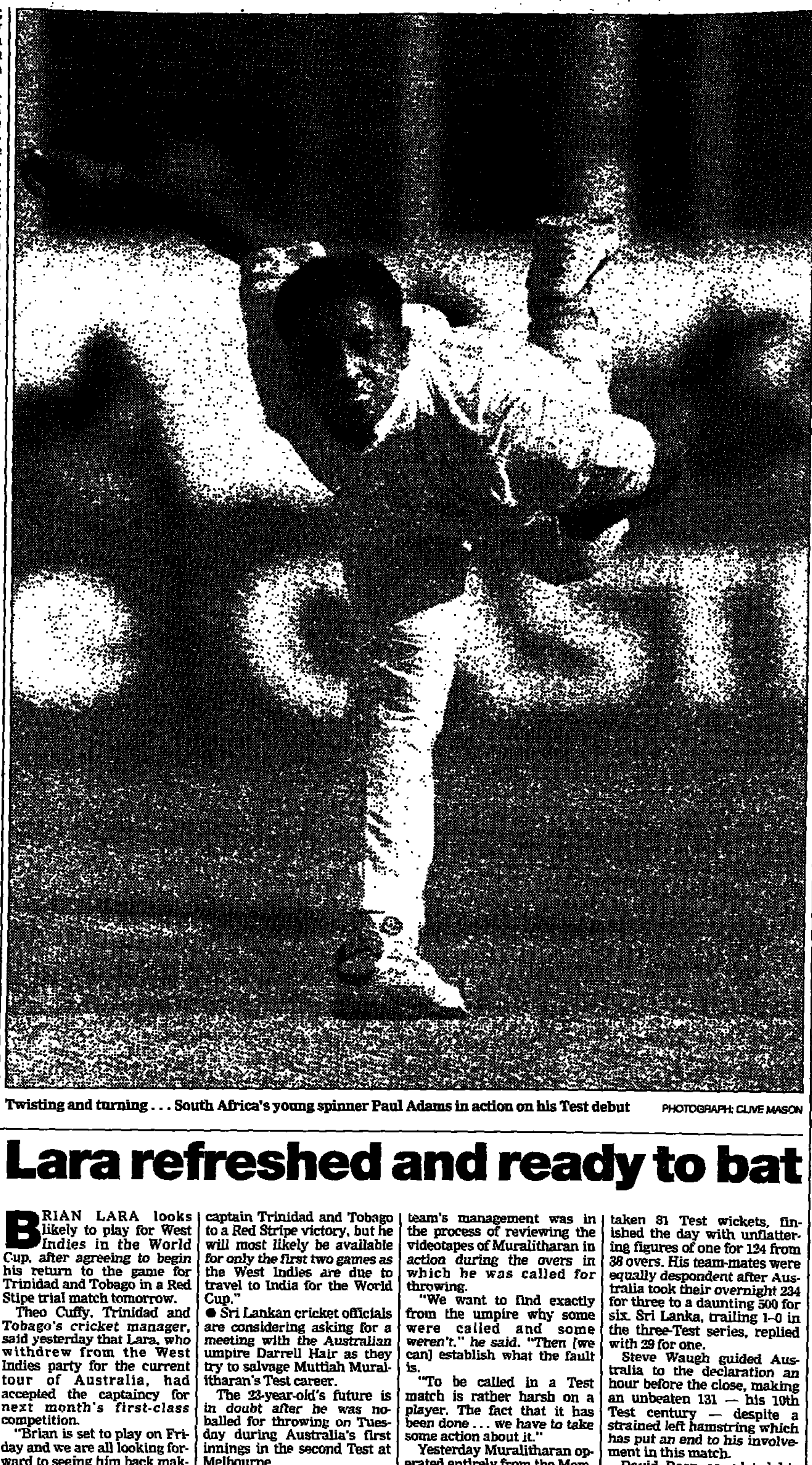
*M A Atherton not out	15
A J Stewart c Richardson b Pollock	4
J E R Gallian not out	14
Extras (lb3, w1, nb3)	7
Total (for 1, 20 overs)	40

Fall of wicket: 7.

To bat: G P Thorpe, G A Hick, R A Smith, †R C Russell, D G Cork, M C Ilott, P J Martin, R K Illingworth.

Bowling: Donald 4–0–9–0; Pollock 5–3–6–1; Adams 7–2–16–0; Matthews 4–2–6–0.

Umpires: C J Mitchley and S A Bucknor.



Twisting and turning . . . South Africa's young spinner Paul Adams in action on his Test debut PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

Cork escapes censure

Mike Selvey

DOMINIC CORK has escaped censure from the match referee Clive Lloyd after suggestions that he might have employed words and actions unbecoming a gentleman after taking a wicket on Boxing Day, the first day of the fourth Test.

Lloyd had asked to view videotape of Cork's dismissal of the South African batsman Jonty Rhodes, who together with Daryll Cullinan had been instrumental in hauling the South Africa innings out of trouble in a century partnership for the fourth wicket.

Shortly before the close Cork had Rhodes caught at the wicket for 49. It may have appeared to Lloyd that the batsman, who would not have been first on the England team Christmas card list, was given an epithet or two to enjoy on the way back to the pavilion. After replaying the incident, however, Lloyd decided yesterday that there was no case to answer.

"The umpires had no complaint and I'm satisfied nothing was said to the batsman," said Lloyd. "But I've had a friendly word with Cork and told him of the need to keep his celebrations on an even keel in case something is misconstrued."

Clearly Cork took the advice to heart immediately; when he had Cullinan — a Derbyshire colleague towards whom he has a large measure of antipathy — caught by Russell yesterday morning, he ran without a sideways glance straight past the batsman and leapt into the wicket-keeper's arms.

● England are to make their first tour to Zimbabwe next year on their way to New Zealand. They will play 10 matches from November 30 to January 3, including the first two Tests between the countries, and three one-day internationals.

"We are extremely grateful to the Test and County Cricket Board for agreeing to this tour by the full England team and for their continuous assistance to all levels of cricket in Zimbabwe," the Zimbabwe Cricket Union said.

England last played Zimbabwe in two one-day internationals on their 1994-95 Australia tour, winning one and losing the other.

Lara refreshed and ready to bat

BRIAN LARA looks likely to play for West Indies in the World Cup, after agreeing to begin his return to the game for Trinidad and Tobago in a Red Stripe trial match tomorrow.

Theo Cuffy, Trinidad and Tobago's cricket manager, said yesterday that Lara, who withdrew from the West Indies party for the current tour of Australia, had accepted the captaincy for next month's first-class competition.

"Brian is set to play on Friday and we are all looking forward to seeing him back making runs. It will be great to see him out there," said Cuffy.

"He has had his rest and he wants to get back to playing cricket. He is looking relaxed and at ease; this holiday has done him a world of good.

"I am sure he would like to captain Trinidad and Tobago to a Red Stripe victory, but he will most likely be available for only the first two games as the West Indies are due to travel to India for the World Cup."

● Sri Lankan cricket officials are considering asking for a meeting with the Australian umpire Darrell Hair as they try to salvage Muttiah Muralitharan's Test career.

The 23-year-old's future is in doubt after he was no-balled for throwing on Tuesday during Australia's first innings in the second Test at Melbourne.

Anura Tennekoon, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka, said that it was essential to discover exactly what Hair found illegal about Muralitharan's style of delivery.

Tennekoon, a former Sri Lanka captain, said the team's management was in the process of reviewing the videotapes of Muralitharan in action during the overs in which he was called for throwing.

"We want to find exactly from the umpire why some were called and some weren't," he said. "Then [we can] establish what the fault is.

"To be called in a Test match is rather harsh on a player. The fact that it has been done . . . we have to take some action about it."

Yesterday Muralitharan operated entirely from the Members' End under the gaze of the New Zealand umpire Steve Dunne, who did not no-ball him despite the fact that the Sri Lankan's action appeared no different from Tuesday. Hair was silent as he looked on from square leg.

Muralitharan, who has taken 81 Test wickets, finished the day with unflattering figures of one for 124 from 38 overs. His team-mates were equally despondent after Australia took their overnight 234 for three to a daunting 500 for six. Sri Lanka, trailing 1–0 in the three-Test series, replied with 29 for one.

Steve Waugh guided Australia to the declaration an hour before the close, making an unbeaten 131 — his 10th Test century — despite a strained left hamstring which has put an end to his involvement in this match.

David Boon completed his 21st Test hundred, eventually falling for 110, slashing a wide ball from the pace bowler Pramodya Wickremasinghe to Muralitharan.

Ricky Ponting, playing in his second Test, followed up his 96 in Perth with an impressive 71.

Badminton

Nielsen withdrawal loses him credit

Richard Jago

ANDERS NIELSEN, the national champion, is to have his funding stopped by the Badminton Association of England for the second time this season. The enmity between the 28-year-old Nielsen and his governing body will hasten his retirement from the sport.

He will receive no further financial support until after the end of the Olympic qualifying period on May 1. By then he will have been without money from the association for seven months and is likely to have spent about £6,000 from his own pocket trying to get to Atlanta.

The three-month extension to the ban has been imposed for again withdrawing from a British Grand Slam tournament without a medical certificate. The latest withdrawal is from the Hampshire Open which begins today. In September Nielsen withdrew from the Perth Open, infuriating the association, which wants its leading players to promote the recently formed domestic circuit.

Nielsen now claims the hard floors at Portsmouth create a fitness hazard. "I'm already having to pay my way to the Finnish and Portuguese Opens next month and I can't risk injuring my knees. The players have writen complaining about the floor before and nothing has been done about it. It's a disgrace."

The association's events director Tom Marrs had little sympathy: "He must be desperate, to make this an excuse," he said. "The floor is similar to that of 90 per cent of leisure centres in this country and many top-class players have competed on it without complaint."

Nielsen admitted: "Because I have no support from the association and no commitment to playing in this country I have blatantly broken the rules this time."

He is likely to retire after the Olympics — should he get there. There is much to do, even though the £500 he paid to go to Sofia was rewarded by valuable computer points when he won the Bulgarian Open two months ago. He is still, at No. 40, 11 places lower in the world rankings than Darren Hall and nine places below the Scottish Open champion Peter Knowles. Only the top two British men will occupy singles places at the Games.

Boxing

Murray death leads Hertsmere council to ban WBO fight

JAMES MURRAY's death in Glasgow in October has led to the sport being banned at the Furzefield Centre in Potters Bar, where Mark Delaney was to defend his WBO Inter-Continental super-middleweight title against the Welsh champion Darron Griffiths on January 23.

Though Barry Hearn's Matchroom organisation has staged three successful promotions at the venue this year, the owner, Hertsmere Council, has called it a day. The Delaney fight and supporting bill is to be switched to Bethnal Green.

A spokesman for the council said: "Given recent boxing tragedies which have involved crowd unrest, particularly in Glasgow, we feel that Furzefield is not a suitable venue."

Murray was knocked out by Drew Docherty 30 seconds from the end of a 12-round fight for the British bantamweight title. Rival supporters brawled as he lay unconscious in the ring.

Racing

All-day Flat to fill void

Ron Cox

THE British Horseracing Board, working flat out with Cheltenham and Wolverhampton racecourses, has come up with a package of measures which go some way to brightening the gloom of the past week.

An extra all-weather Flat meeting has been arranged for Saturday afternoon at Wolverhampton, and Cheltenham on New Year's Day will include two new races designed to compensate for the loss of yesterday's Christmas Hurdle at Kempton and the Castleford Chase at Wetherby.

The new era of flexibility ushered in by the BHB could result in as many as 14 races being run at Wolverhampton. The afternoon programme is due to start at 12.55, with the already scheduled floodlit evening card getting under way at 7pm.

However, the new meeting will only go ahead if sufficient entries are received to ensure competitive racing. Trainers have until noon today to enter, and the BHB will review the response.

Weather permitting, Cheltenham will stage an eight-race card on Monday. The Levy Board Chase and Bonusprint Hurdle, both limited handicaps and both carrying prize-money of £15,000, have been added to the programme.

The expected loss of yesterday's Kempton card means the rescheduled King George VI Chase switches to Sandown on Saturday week.

All ante-post bets are void, with stakes refunded, and bookmakers have formed a new market on the race, which is now open to all original entrants including Master Oats and Young Hustler, who would not have run at Kempton.

One Man, who will be ridden by Richard Dunwoody at Sandown, is 13–8 favourite with Hill's but 5–2 is available with Coral.

Coral, sponsor of the Welsh National which was due to be run at Chepstow yesterday, has decided not to reschedule the race for Newbury on Saturday in view of the bad weather.

Instead it will sponsor the £25,000 Coral Grand National Trial at Chepstow on February 3. Formerly run as the John Hughes Memorial, the three miles and five furlongs chase is doubled in prize-money.

An inch of snow overnight quickly put paid to Kempton yesterday. The meeting was called off after a morning inspection, and today's fixtures at Carlisle, Plumpton, Stratford and Taunton were all abandoned yesterday.

Racing faces another blank day tomorrow. Newcastle was called off yesterday; Fontwell and Newbury inspect this morning and Warwick at 12.30.

Sport in brief

Olympic Games

Boris Yeltsin is backing St Petersburg's attempt to host the 2004 Olympic Games. The Russian president has issued a decree ordering the setting up of a special programme to promote a bid from the city.

St Petersburg faces competition from Rome, Seville, Stockholm, Athens, Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town and Buenos Aires to make the shortlist of four or five in March 1997. "We will definitely be among the four chosen," said a Russian Olympic official. "The rest is not definite."

He gave few details of what the programme demanded by Yeltsin would involve, except that it was likely to include new sports facilities.

Darts

Phil Taylor made an impressive start to his defence of the Vernon Pools World Championship in Purfleet, Essex yesterday when he beat Cliff Lazarenko 3-0 in an opening group match.

Jocky Wilson, the 45-year-old Scot, was the tournament's first casualty when he withdrew with diabetes less than 24 hours before the start.

Skiing

The World Cup leader Lasse Kjus finished sixth but still led the speed specialists Luc Alphand and Patrick Ortlieb in yesterday's first practice for tomorrow's World Cup downhill at Bormia, Italy.

Hockey

Great Britain have accepted an invitation to take part in a pre-Olympic tournament on the Atlanta Olympic pitches from April 15–21. Britain's opponents will be Argentina, Netherlands, Pakistan, South Korea and the United States.

MORTGAGES
NOTICE OF INTEREST RATE VARIATION ON MORTGAGES FROM BANK OF SCOTLAND BRANCHES

The following interest rate will apply from 10 January 1996 for loans not yet drawn and from the first payment date on or after 1 February 1996 for existing Bank of Scotland Branch Customers.

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HOW SPORT SURVIVES THE FREEZE

Extra cover . . . the Villa Park groundsmen replace the frost-proof covers after Boxing Day's abortive attempt to stage a match with Liverpool

No sleep until Hell freezes over

John Duncan on a long-standing problem which usually gets round to haunting groundsmen at this time of year

A LOT has changed in the groundsman's lonely struggle against the elements since the January 1963 day when the then Swindon manager Bert Head beat the worst-ever winter freeze by insisting that tons of sand be dumped on the County Ground and telling his team to play in special footwear. Swindon went out and defeated QPR 5–0.

"All I can say is that it shouldn't have been played," said Don Rogers, who scored that day.

"We were on the pitch getting it ready and Bert decided to get in a supply of basketball boots because he reckoned you could stand up about 10 per cent better with them on. I felt sorry for QPR. We were skating about a bit but they couldn't stand up at all."

A smattering of postponements may not yet count as a big freeze, but it remains a surprise that modern football's commercial monster can be so easily slain by a cold snap. "That's inexcusable at Premiership level," said Steven Moore, the managing director of Sportsturf, the Red Adair of the football pitch and a group which has been called in to sort out crises at QPR, Spurs and Wolves in recent seasons.

"You shouldn't have that situation any more. Up to 15 years ago you were still dealing with sand-and-soil mixture, which meant you were left with four corners of grass by November and the rest was mud. But in the past 10 years you'll find that three quarters of the Premier League clubs have completely rebuilt their pitches to various designs."

Aston Villa, stung by a Tuesday postponement that may cost £100,000 in reduced gate receipts, will install undersoil heating in 1997, the club announced yesterday. The system, which costs from £180,000 to £200,000 to install, involves running 15½ miles of piping 11 inches from the surface, and pumping thousands of gallons of hot water around the pitch at the flick of a switch. It costs £25,000 a year to maintain, but would appear to be a good investment for a club who have now lost out on two home Boxing Day matches in three years. It may also appeal to Scottish clubs, where the Boxing Day programme was abandoned apart from at Rangers, who have heating at Ibrox Park.

However, undersoil heating brings problems of its own, with early versions affecting the growth of the grass and restricting drainage and maintenance. "Coventry put it in in the Eighties and took it out because of the problems it caused," said Moore.

Heating often is a pipe-dream, beyond the means of the majority of league clubs. For them the ingenuity of a loyal groundsman rather than the turf technologists' textbook is the last line of defence. Charlie Hasler, whose Leyton Orient pitch is a regular award winner, has to fight off the freeze as best he can. If Hell froze over, say his supporters, Hasler could make it playable.

"For the last game against Exeter," he said, "I used this banner that our sponsors gave us for advertising in the middle of the pitch for one game. I never gave it back to them and it came in very useful because it covered one 18-yard box.

"And we had a film company down here in the summer and they built a stand behind one of the goals which they covered with plastic sheets. I liberated a few of them and now I use them to cover up the other penalty box.

"You've got to be enterprising at this level. It's not like Steve [Braddock] at Highbury, where he just flicks a switch and on comes the heating." Braddock's Highbury surface is regarded by groundsmen as the benchmark for everyone else.

The financial pressure in many ways is greater for Leyton Orient than Arsenal. "It's a headache," said Hasler. "We're expecting a 10,000 crowd for the Gillingham game on New Year's Day. I was speaking to the manager this morning and he's really hyped up about it, and that puts a lot of pressure on you. But the weather in the end is the master."

And it has an unhappy knack of tripping groundsmen up. "We were playing Coventry in the Cup before we had the undersoil," said Brian Saunders, head groundsman at Norwich City, who have had heating since 1992, "and the club were determined that the game would go ahead. So we taped 92 polythene sheets together and put hot-air blowers in the corners.

"The night before, though, there was freezing fog and the air was so heavy that the canopy collapsed on to the pitch and froze on it, so the game had to be called off. I hadn't slept for two days."

As the cold closes in before the weekend, more than a few groundsmen will know the feeling all too well.

Racing

Ron Cox

RACING is counting the cost of a cold snap which has claimed 20 meetings already this week with the prospect of more casualties to come.

The loss of all 10 meetings on Boxing Day wiped out an estimated betting turnover of £50 million. In terms of levy income that should have been generated, the loss is in the region of £500,000.

Tuesday's blank Boxing Day was the first since the foot-and-mouth epidemic of 1967, but there will be no repeat of the winter of 1962–63, when only one meeting took place between December 22 and March 7. All-weather racing, introduced in 1989, will see to that.

Racing takes place at one of the three all-weather tracks — Lingfield Park, Southwell and Wolverhampton — every racing day during January and February and continues extensively in March.

Recent blank days in the betting shops have seen South African racing being beamed in to supplement the diet of greyhound racing and what little Irish racing has survived. But all-weather racing is the only answer to a prolonged freeze.

"South African racing serves its function," said Tom Kelly, spokesman for the Betting Office Licencees' Association. "But we need to look again at all-weather racing.

"Here we are with three tracks but none scheduled to meet the need in December."

All-weather racing was certainly conspicuous by its absence on Boxing Day.

However, as Paul Greeves, racing director at the British Horseracing Board, explained: "It costs around £40,000 to stage an all-weather fixture and in normal Boxing Day circumstances you could not guarantee getting all that back in Levy."

Racecourses ease the pain of cancelled meetings by insuring against the bad weather. Kempton Park, which lost its most prestigious day of the year with the postponement of the King George VI Chase on Boxing Day, was covered for a sum in excess of £100,000.

But Edward Gillespie, managing director of United Racecourses, dispelled the notion that Kempton made a bigger profit by cancelling than would have been the case if racing had gone ahead.

"That £100,000 is a comfort figure, based on the average income from this meeting over the past three years, and does not allow for any growth," he said.

Prohibitive costs rule out the possibility of any form of under-soil heating at turf tracks, which brings us back to the all-weather.

Richard Muddle, managing director at Wolverhampton, which lost its scheduled turf meeting on Boxing Day, regrets no all-weather Flat card was programmed for the 27th to be brought forward 24 hours to save the day.

It will need that sort of forward planning to beat the next freeze and prevent further loss to racing's revenue, already reeling from the effects of the National Lottery.

Rugby Union

Chris Hewett

RUGBY UNION may be charging headlong towards full professionalism but, when the winter starts to bite, amateur hour is still a regular feature at club level.

On Boxing Day, Bristol were to play at Newport. After a precautionary check-call the West Countrymen headed off over the Severn Bridge under the impression that all was well at Rodney Parade, but arrived to find the surface frozen solid. "It would have been safer to play in the car park," said their coach Brian Hanlon after the game was called off.

In the good old days such setbacks were considered nothing more than an inconvenience. But rugby has now exposed itself to the harsh economic realities of supply and demand; players and supporters are the ones making those demands and it is up to the clubs to do the providing. At the moment they cannot do so.

Only the Courage champions Leicester can boast facilities to rival the average Endsleigh League outfit, and although the big international stadiums are largely weather-resistant — undersoil heating and state-of-the-art covers almost guarantee a clear run for the Five Nations Championship — the men who draw up the domestic club calendar are openly fearful of the effects of a hard winter.

The current "structured season" allows for only five weekends free of league, cup or representative rugby.

Anything approaching a big freeze would cause such mayhem that top international players would be pressed into two games a week. That, or the Courage title would effectively be decided by a clutch of second-string performers.

Rugby League

Paul Fitzpatrick

IN FUTURE frozen pitches should not present a problem for rugby league, which switches to a March-through-September season next year. But then they rarely were a worry in the past. The problem, when it occurred, was met with brief hand-wringing; then it went to the bottom of the agenda once the weather improved.

Only Leeds and Wigan have invested in under-soil heating systems. The rest make do with pitchforks, braziers and straw. Access to lightweight plastic sheeting — made available through a deal brokered by the Rugby Football League — has helped, but not enough to defy really heavy freezes.

The sport may consider itself unlucky to be dragged into the costly business of ground-safety improvements. But it is doubtful whether investments would have been made in under-soil heating even if the money had been available.

Leeds were the first club with vision. They installed their heating for £6,488 in April 1963; it has paid for itself a thousandfold.

Soccer

Rangers want Saunders

Ian Ross

RANGERS are the latest club to show an interest in bringing the striker Dean Saunders back from Turkey.

News of Saunders's disenchantment with life by the Bosphorous reached Scotland last week, prompting Rangers' manager Walter Smith to make contact with Galatasaray, the Welsh international's club.

Smith discussed the situation with the Galatasaray coach Graeme Souness, a long-time friend and former Rangers manager. Saunders, 32 in June, is desperate to return to Britain but Souness told Smith that he wanted to recoup the £2 million he paid Aston Villa for the player last summer.

Although Saunders and his family have failed to embrace the Turkish culture, he is regarded as a hero in Istanbul. He is also the only one of Souness's British imports left; Barry Venison has joined Southampton and Mike Marsh went to Southend.

Galatasaray yesterday completed a £1.65 million deal with Feyenoord for the Dutch international defender Ulrich van Gobbel, but also denied that they were seeking to offload the Welshman.

Saunders has been pursued by several clubs recently, notably Everton, who made an approach when Duncan Ferguson was jailed for assault nearly three months ago.

Rangers had planned to fund their bid partly by selling Alexei Mikhailichenko, who is considering an offer from Wolverhampton Wanderers. The Russian international midfielder, who would probably cost £500,000, met Wolves' new manager Mark McGhee yesterday after reluctantly conceding that he was all but surplus to requirements at Ibrox Park.

Despite investing £1 million in Queens Park Rangers' Simon Osborne and then declaring his wish to spend £1.4 million on Everton's Vinny Samways, McGhee still has money to spend.

"It is not a bottomless pit, but let's say it is a deep hole," he said. "We are trying to improve things here and while I am realistic enough to appreciate that it will not happen overnight, I believe that we are moving in the right direction by trying to bring in players of experience and quality."

Another recently installed manager apparently seeking to put daylight between himself and his club's money is Sheffield United's Howard Kendall. Having bought Mark Patterson from Bolton Wanderers last week, and after seeing his £1 million bid for the West Bromwich Albion striker Bob Taylor rejected, Kendall will now try to lure Everton's Gary Ablett across the Pennines.

Manchester City, meanwhile, have agreed a two-month loan-trial with the Benfica central defender Eduardo Abazaj, an Albanian international with a Portuguese passport. City now have five foreigners on their books.

Saunders . . . unsettled

Premiership: Bolton 0, Leeds United 2

Brolin the ice-breaker

David Hopps

LEEDS UNITED completed their second Christmas victory at frost-bound Burnden Park last night with an adventurous performance which raised expectations that they can repeat last season's late rush to a European place.

Bolton Wanderers remain three points adrift at the foot of the Premiership after falling to a goal in each half from Tomas Brolin and David Wetherall.

It can be a tough life being a professional footballer, temperatures dropping to –10C and not even cold-weather payments of £8.50 a week to sustain them. Leeds, instead, took heart from their sterling victory against Manchester United whereas Bolton, with only two Premiership wins all season, paraded their new striker from Sheffield United, Nathan Blake.

You could tell that Blake was new because he was the one Bolton player to forget to slap hands with Lofty the Lion, the team's mascot, as he ran on to the pitch. Blake's first greeting, indeed, was much more in character, a rash challenge on Richard Jobson for which he was booked.

Yeboah's balance on the frosty surface matched anybody's and when Deane's header set up a goal-bound tussle with Taggart it was as much as the Bolton defender could do not to haul him down.

When the Northern Ireland defender did make contact minutes later he, too, was booked. McAllister's deflected free-kick careered off the inside of the post and, in an almighty scramble, Yeboah failed to turn the ball in.

Beeney, still preferred in the Leeds goal to John Lukic, found his nerve severely tested as Bolton repeatedly shot from distance. Sellars's wickedly bouncing effort ricocheted off Beeney's chest, but the greatest threat came from Sneekes, the most shot-happy of all.

Leeds clearly fancied their chances. They spread Bolton's three central defenders by switching Brolin from a withdrawn position to wide on the right and, six minutes from the interval, took the lead. Kelly's cross from the goalline was headed down by Yeboah and Brolin stabbed the ball in as Bolton anticipated offside.

Bolton's midfield is clearly of Premiership quality, it is the rest of the side that is the problem, and Curcic's drive narrowly wide from 25 yards was much in keeping. More heartening for their survival chances was a brief show of understanding between Blake and McGinlay, with Jobson's excellent saving tackle denying the latter a clear opportunity.

Wanderers did not lack spirit and Jobson had to pull off a second saving tackle on McGinlay which was all the more worthy considering that he had just become the fifth name in Mr Elleray's notebook. Leeds broke immediately, for Deane's shot to strike the outside of the post.

A second Leeds goal after 62 minutes dispelled their anxiety. Ford centred from the left after a corner had been cleared, and the central defender Wetherall, who had stayed up, headed firmly past Branagan.

Bolton Wanderers: Branagan; Green, Bergsson, Fairclough, Taggart, Phillips (De Freitas, 88min), Curcic, Sneekes (Burnett, 88), Sellars, McGinlay, Blake.

Leeds United: Beeney; Kelly, Wetherall, Jobson, Dorigo, Ford, Brolin (Radebe, 90), McAllister, Speed, Deane, Yeboah.

Referee: D Elleray (Harrow-on-the-Hill).

Gazza's form raises hopes

Patrick Glenn hears warm words from Walter Smith

PAUL GASCOIGNE's rehabilitation at Ibrox after years of turmoil caused by injury and his own irresponsibility is beginning to convince Walter Smith that the midfielder is capable of recapturing the form that made him the most exciting British player of the past decade.

Rangers' manager watched Gascoigne return from a two-match suspension to score one goal and help create two others in the 3-0 victory over Kilmarnock on Boxing Day. And although it was otherwise generally a bland afternoon for the England player, Smith insisted that Gascoigne's recent form and behaviour had been encouraging.

"We know it's a bit of window dressing; scoring and being involved in the other two goals made it look as though he'd had a good day," said Smith. "But he was enjoying his game prior to the ban he picked up and I think he'll start to make his presence felt again.

"I expected his first season in Scotland to be difficult, but mainly because of the time he had been out with injury. What I didn't expect was the publicity he would generate, where every move he makes on and off the field comes under the microscope."

Rangers and Gascoigne face one of their most testing challenges of the season in next Wednesday's collision with Celtic at Parkhead, a match which could have a huge influence on the outcome of the championship.

Rangers' win over Kilmarnock put them five points ahead and, with Celtic's match at Hearts on Saturday already extremely doubtful, the Scottish champions have an opportunity to extend that lead when they play Hibernian on Ibrox's heated pitch.

Smith . . . highly encouraged

"It is an advantage to be able to play and put the points in the bank while Celtic don't, and I'd rather have that and exert more pressure on them. Whoever wins the New Year match is going to get a great lift, and if we can go into it eight points ahead it's going to put a lot more pressure on Celtic."

The vexed question of the Scottish winter prompted Smith to say that undersoil heating should be compulsory for Premier Division clubs.

"It's to the championship's detriment if one side is playing on a good ground and the challengers are having to cope with a dodgy surface. That's unfair on any team. We wouldn't like it if it happened to us. The question of a winter break is so difficult because we wouldn't know when to take it. But if we ever cut the number of matches, I would be in favour of a short break over Christmas and New Year."

● The Ajax coach Heini Otto is helping Celtic train some of their young players. Yesterday he was in Scotland to assist in coaching a group of eight-to-14-year-olds.

Results

Soccer

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

Bolton (0) 0 — Leeds (1) 2
18 414 — Brolin 40, Wetherall 83

Man Utd (1) 2 — Newcastle (0) 0
Cole 6, Keane 53 — 42,024

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle	20	14	3	3	40	18	45
Man Utd	20	11	5	4	36	22	38
Tottenham	20	9	8	3	26	19	35
Liverpool	19	10	4	5	34	16	34
Arsenal	20	9	7	4	27	15	34
Middlesbrough	20	9	6	5	23	18	33
Aston Villa	18	9	5	5	25	16	32
Leeds	19	9	4	6	28	25	31
Nottm Forest	19	7	10	2	29	27	31
Blackburn	20	8	4	8	31	25	28
Chelsea	20	7	7	6	19	21	28
Everton	20	7	5	8	27	22	26
West Ham	19	6	5	8	21	28	23
Sheff Wed	20	5	7	8	28	30	22
Southampton	20	4	7	9	19	30	19
Wimbledon	20	4	6	10	26	40	18
QPR	20	5	3	12	15	29	18
Man City	20	4	4	12	10	30	16
Coventry	19	3	6	10	25	41	15
Bolton	20	2	4	14	18	36	10

ICIS LEAGUE: First Division Postponed: Bognor Regis Tn v Tooting & Mitcham Utd. **Second Division:** Ware 2, Chesham 2. **Postponed:** Met Police v Hampton.
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Milwall 2, Oxford Utd 4. **Postponed:** Chelsea v Southampton; Crystal Palace v Bristol C; Portsmouth v Ipswich; QPR v Charlton.

Rugby Union

REPRESENTATIVE MATCH: Leicester 51, Barbarians 25.
SRU U-21 INTER DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP: Cancelled: Glasgow v Edinburgh.

Rugby League

BURTONWOOD BREWERY LANCASHIRE CUP: Final: Postponed: Woolston v Saddleworth.

Basketball

NBA: Toronto 93, Milwaukee 87; Atlanta 94, LA Clippers 86; Detroit 100, Golden State 90; Miami 96, New Jersey 93; Indiana 103, Chicago 97; Houston 100, Vancouver 84; Denver 114, Dallas 102; Utah 114, Portland 104; LA Lakers 102, Boston 91; Sacramento 115, San Antonio 98.

Darts

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Purfleet): **Group One:** P Taylor (Eng) bt C Lazarenko (Eng) 3–0. **Group Two:** S Downes (US) bt K Spiolek (Eng) 3–0. **Group Three:** P Evison (Eng) bt S Raw (Eng) 3–2. **Group Four:** J Lowe (Eng) bt D Smith (Eng) 3–0.

Chess

GRONINGEN OPEN: Round Seven leaders: J Degraeve (Fri), L Hatey (Ger), R Kempinski, B Socko (Pol), A Onischuk (Ukr), J Howell, A Summerscale (Eng) 5½. **Standings:** A Karpov (Rus) 4½; G Kamsky (US) P Leko (Hun), I Sokolov (Bos), P Svidler (Rus), L van Wely (Neth) 4; Z Almasi (Hun), C Hansen (Den) 3½; J Lautier (Fr), S Tiviakov (Rus) 3; M Adams (Eng) 2½; J Piket (Neth) 2.

Cricket

SECOND TEST: Melbourne: Second day: Australia 500–6 dec (S Waugh 131no, D Boon 110, R Ponting 71, M Slater 62, M Waugh 61) Sri Lanka 29–1.

CASTLE CUP: Pearl: Boland 231 (K Jackson 56; Pringle 5–67). Western Province 150–2 (H Gibbs 57no). **East London:** Free State 188 (C Craven 47). Border 280–8 (P Seydom 58; Venter 4–58).

Hockey

MENZIESHILL INDOOR TOURNAMENT (Dundee): Insights Menzieshill 9, Bett Inns 3; Torbrex Wndrs 11, Dita Travellers (North American select) 6; Touche Ross Gordonians 3, O Loughtonians 6.

Ice Hockey

BRITISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Basingstoke 3, Sheffield 4; Cardiff 5, Nottingham 5. **Division One:** Dumfries 16, Murrayfield 2; Solihull 2, Guildford 21; Telford 10, Medway 3.
NHL: Detroit 3, St Louis 2; NY Islanders 3, Boston 3 (ot); NY Rangers 8, Ottawa 4; Pittsburgh 6, Buffalo 3; Washington 4, Montreal 0; Chicago 5, Dallas 3; Colorado 5, San Jose 1; Calgary 4, Vancouver 2.

Snooker

DR MARTENS EUROPEAN LEAGUE (Irthlingborough): P Ebdon (Eng) bt K Doherty (Ire) 5–0.

Fixtures

Hockey

MENZIESHILL INDOOR TOURNAMENT (10.15pm Duck McTaggart SC, Dundee).

U-17/15 DIVISIONAL TOURNAMENTS (10.45, Bristol).
WOMEN'S U-21 TERRITORIAL TOURNAMENT (11.0, Rotherham): West v North; East v South; Midlands v West.
WOMEN'S U-18/16 TERRITORIAL TOURNAMENTS (12.30, Sheffield).

Ice Hockey

BRITISH ASSOCIATION: Division One: Swindon v Bracknell (5.0).

● AC Milan's Liberian striker George Weah said yesterday that he will offer his Golden Ball award in an effort to bring peace to his homeland.

The annual award, organised by France Football, is one of the most highly regarded individual accolades in European soccer. It is the first year it has been open to non-European players.

Weah, who moved to Milan from Paris St Germain earlier this year, said his success could serve as an example to his young countrymen to improve their lives and the country's image.

"I'd like to give them a model for a better future than picking up a gun to fight your own brothers for power," he said. At least 150,000 people were killed in Liberia in factional fighting between December 1989 and August this year, when a peace accord was signed.

"I'd like to offer the Golden Ball award to all the rival forces who have been fighting each other for six years in a war that has destroyed the country," Weah added. "This trophy could help to unite the different factions, foster peace and promote unity for my people."

Chase defies Norwich rebels

NORWICH's chairman Robert Chase yesterday dismissed suggestions that he should resign, despite the latest heated protest against his regime at Carrow Road.

More than 500 angry supporters called for him to quit after the 1–0 defeat by Southend on Boxing Day, with police making three arrests as demonstrations threatened to boil over into violence.

The scenes mirrored events at the end of last season, when Norwich were relegated and police horses were needed to restore order. But Chase was in defiant mood yesterday, although he admitted he was taking "sensible precautions" for the safety of himself and his family.

"I am disappointed, but if you ask if it is deterring me or distracting me the answer is no," he said. "When I went to sleep last night my head hit the pillow and I knew nothing more until someone brought me a cup of tea at 7.30 this morning. I am very fortunate with my make-up that it doesn't have the same effect on me as it does on other people.

"I have been involved in local government and politics for 30 years and have been involved in much more heated scenes when there have been debates on closing village schools or wards in hospitals.

"I would be foolish to say what is going on doesn't affect them, but my family are 100 per cent behind me and there is no pressure from [them] to give up.

"At home we talk about Christmas presents and next year's summer holiday. What we don't talk about is what is happening at Carrow Road."

Cricket
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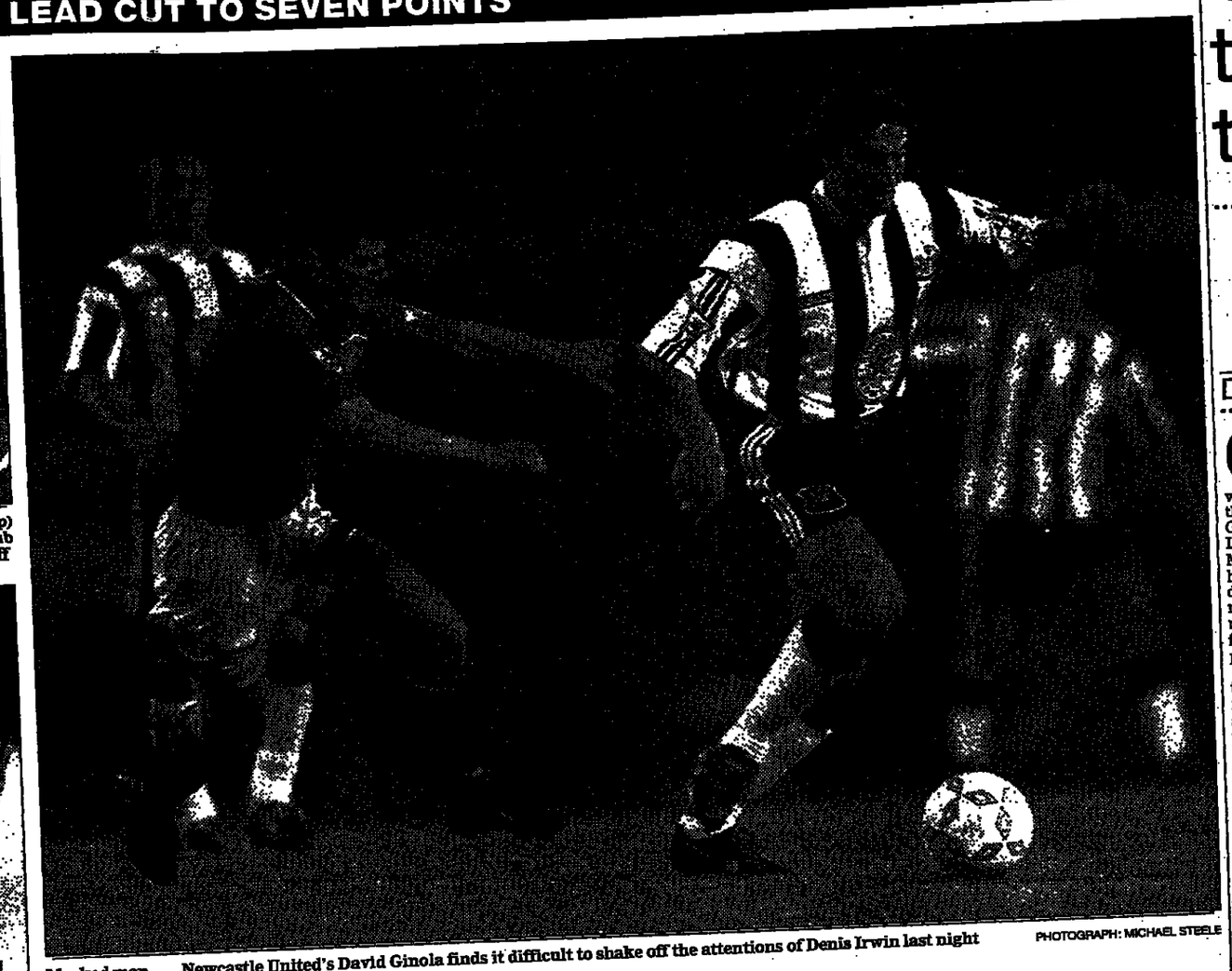
Quotes of the year, page 13
Beating the Big Freeze, page 15

Thursday December 28 1995

SportsGuardian

NEWCASTLE LEAD CUT TO SEVEN POINTS

Mixed fortunes . . . Cole (top) scored against his old club but Gillespie was carried off



Marked man . . . Newcastle United's David Ginola finds it difficult to shake off the attentions of Denis Irwin last night PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Premiership: Manchester United 2, Newcastle United 0

United leave Keegan cold

David Lacey

MANCHESTER United last night reminded Newcastle United that championships are not won in a canter, and that the second half of a season can seem twice as long as the first. Andy Cole, far from being intimidated by a direct comparison with Les Ferdinand, reminded his previous employers that he can still score goals.

A goal in each half, from Cole and Roy Keane, cut Newcastle's lead in the Premiership to seven points, and the sweep and zest of much of the winners' football reduced the visitors' defence to damage limitation. This was only Newcastle's third defeat of the season but it was their second in successive away games.

For Newcastle the championship was beckoning almost as urgently as the new year. For their opponents, after defeats at Liverpool and Leeds, the prospects for a third title in four seasons were beginning to wear a white beard and walk with a stoop. Not that Manchester United allowed time to steal a march on them last night.

Yet as ice formed on the nearby Ship Canal, the home side knew that anything less than a win would leave their hopes looking equally bleak. Defensively, moreover, they looked ill-equipped to withstand the positive passing patterns of Kevin Keegan's team.

Both of Manchester United's regular centre-backs, Bruce and Pallister, were unfit, which gave the defence an unaccustomed look of vulnerability. Last season, in the League Cup, Alex Ferguson had taken a side laden with youth-squad graduates to St James' Park and dominated Newcastle for 70 minutes. Last night his back four wore a makeshift look through necessity, not choice, with Gary Neville and May at centre-back, Irwin switching to right-back and Phillip Neville playing on the left.

Newcastle, then, had every reason to fancy their chances of taking into 1996 a lead similar in length to that with which Manchester United had entered 1994. How swiftly things have changed at St James' Park. The last time Alex Ferguson's side had been beaten in three successive league games, culminating in the defeat at Anfield in 1992 that gave Leeds the championship, Newcastle were having to beat Portsmouth to stay in the old Second Division.

Manchester United's response to an evening full of pessimistic portents was a logical one. From the outset Giggs, Cantona and Cole attacked the Newcastle defence in a bewildering series of runs, both with and without the ball, and within six minutes boldness had been rewarded.

The movement through which they took their early lead exploited a broad corridor of space which had opened up between Newcastle's midfield and their back four. As Giggs brought the ball in from the left, Cantona confused the opposition with a run across the face of the defence on the opposite diagonal. This dragged Newcastle's cover across from the right, leaving Cole unmarked. Giggs's pass unerringly found its man and Cole gratefully drove a low shot past Srnicek.

Another six minutes and Newcastle had lost the human element in the Cole transfer, Gillespie giving way to Watson after being hurt in a tackle with Phillip Neville.

The zeal with which Manchester United defended on their 18-yard line meant that Ferdinand found few opportunities to take on opponents for pace. When Howey sent the striker clear on the right just before the half-hour, however, Ferdinand's speed kept him onside and only Schmeichel's luck in deflecting the shot wide off his right instep prevented an equaliser.

Another sort of rough justice nearly saw Beresford sent off in the 33rd minute through mistaken identity. Barton, Newcastle's fair-haired right-back, had been cautioned earlier for kicking the ball away at a free-kick. When Beresford deliberately handled, caution was followed by dismissal, but then Paul Alcock realised he had got the wrong man. Thus two blonds did not make a red.

The loss of May shortly before half-time forced Ferguson to make a further readjustment. Keane moved into the back four, with McClair coming into midfield. Not that this made much difference when the second goal arrived, as it quickly did.

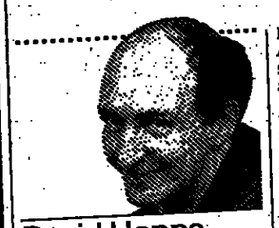
Giggs struck the bar in the 49th minute, and three minutes later a prodigious pass from Philip Neville on the left found the unmarked Keane stealing into the area from the right to increase Manchester United's lead with a confident shot into the far corner.

Manchester United: Schmeichel; Irwin, G Neville, May (McClair, h-t), P Neville, Beckham, Keane, Butt, Giggs, Cantona, Cole.

Newcastle United: Srnicek; Barton, Peacock, Howey, Beresford, Gillespie (Watson, 16min), Lee, Clark (Kitson, 73), Ginola, Beardsley, Ferdinand.

Referee: P Alcock (Redhill).

Chucking and the heart of the Muttiah



David Hopps

CHRISTMAS is traditionally a time for charades, and the greatest charade of all was enacted on Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The calling of the Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan for throwing has been a conscientious decision made by honourable men, but that does not allay misgivings that the entire performance was an absurd pretence.

By the unyielding insistence that the ultimate authority for determining an action's legality must remain with the umpires, cricket's chiefs are allowing their reverence for tradition, not for the first time, to cloud their judgment.

Ever since John Willes, one of the first round-arm bowlers, was no-balled at Lord's in 1822 and responded by hurling the ball to the ground, leaping on to his horse in a rage and riding out of cricket for ever, umpires have been loth to judge an action as illegal.

That has certainly been the case with Muralitharan, who had survived a ceaseless whispering campaign over three years, and 22 Tests, to become Sri Lanka's leading Test wicket-taker. Opponents crushed in the meantime, England among them, will reckon that this particular stable door has been closed long after the horse has bolted.

BUT Muri is undoubtedly a highly skilled bowler, and his action a borderline case which, in technologically advanced times, leaves the umpires in an invidious position. What superhuman skills does the Australian umpire Darrell Hair possess (other than a thick skin) to call Muri for throwing at normal speed, from four strides behind him, when an assortment of camera angles, with the benefits of slow motion, offer opportunity for detailed assessment?

Hair, according to his colleagues, does not shun the limelight. *Laissez-faire* is not in his dictionary. He had already expressed concern over Muri's action during the Champions' Trophy in Sharjah in October. While he was umpiring the early stages of England's Test series in South Africa, his opportunity for a second bite was being keenly anticipated.

The fact is that Hair knew the prevailing mood. He was aware that three International Cricket Council match referees had already expressed reservations, and that the Sri Lankans had been confidentially advised to "tidy up" Muri's action.

He knew also that Graham Dowling, the match referee for the Sri Lankan series in Australia, had this year, as chief executive of the New Zealand board, supplied the ICC with what his board publicly described as "damning evidence" against Muri's action.

So much was in place that, when Hair no-balled Muri seven times in three overs, and the ICC's chief executive David Richards (with astonishing rapidity, especially at Christmas) issued a statement supporting that action, it all had the air of a set-up. But the insistence that the umpire is the sole arbiter goes on.

RICHARDS should not be slighted for efficiency. But in Test matches a far more candid system could easily be employed, one in which the match umpires express their reservations to both the match referee and the TV umpire, who are then empowered to study video evidence. If necessary, and only after a warning, the bowler could then be removed from the attack.

Such a method would be heartily endorsed by a majority of Test umpires and match referees. These days umpires are not entrusted with run-out decisions; how can they possibly be expected to call a player for throwing?

What Muri, the only Tamil in the Sri Lanka side, does not deserve is a career wrecked by indecision. When a Lord's subcommittee decided in 1968 (and then only by a "clear majority") that Harold Rhodes's action was essentially fair, it had taken eight years to reach the verdict, and by then the Derbyshire seamer was 32.

He had been filmed repeatedly, at times in a black-and-white sleeve and a splint, satisfied many umpires and provoked a few. A potential England career had been lost.

"If they rewrite the laws and say that double-jointed people must not be allowed to play the first-class game, well, fair enough," lamented Rhodes. Muri, variously credited with a double-jointed wrist and a deformity from birth which prevents him straightening his arm, knows the feeling.

Cricket news, page 14

Cole deal looks better now

Cynthia Bateman at Old Trafford sees the £7 million man allay some of the doubts and come good at the right time

ALEX FERGUSON was exonerated after five minutes. The moment Andy Cole's right foot went back, a packed Old Trafford knew that this was the time the hammer connected with the detonator and the bullet would find its target. Sure enough, the net hissed and then bulged, and Cole, who has had some desperate luck in front of goal this season, knew his nightmare was over.

It was his fifth goal for United — a humble enough tally at this stage of the season, which is what all the aggro has been about. And Newcastle supporters, who doubted Kevin Keegan's sanity, never mind wisdom, when he swapped Cole for United's winger Keith Gillespie and £6.25 million, had not been bearding him recently on the St James' steps seeking explanations.

The reason for that was not only Cole's dismal form but the fact that Keegan spent the £6 million on Les Ferdinand, who has not stopped scoring since he joined in the summer — and is enjoying every moment of it. "I used to get a thrill listening to the Newcastle crowd when I played for QPR," he said. "I couldn't wait to join them."

Cole, on the other hand, had been unhappy in the North-east. The first time anyone there saw him smile was when he signed for Ferguson a year ago.

So here, in front of a full house and with 30 countries watching live on satellite television, was the chance for the first time to weigh the balances: Ferguson v Keegan, Ferdinand v Cole, Ginola v Cantona.

Cole, who never seemed to recover form after a shin operation in the summer, had been substituted of late as Ferguson began to run out of patience. Keegan had no such problems as Ferdinand scored 21 goals halfway into the season to be the Premiership's joint top scorer on 18 with Shearer.

The contest was anticipated with the relish of a hungry labrador eyeing the Christmas turkey, despite temperatures dropping to -8C. "Your batteries will freeze," one radio commentator warned a French broadcaster. At least it sounded like batteries.

Hot Cole it certainly was. Facing his old club for the first time with everything to prove in front of both sets of supporters, he ghosted into spaces, leaving Newcastle's defence chasing his shadow. As Giggs made a solo run from the halfway line, Cole drifted out to the right of the penalty area. With no one near him he struck hard and true. All was forgiven.

Ferdinand then emerged from the shadows but his speciality, the glancing header, went wide. Then, in a mirror image of Cole's goal, he found himself free just inside the area — but Schmeichel stretched and, with his right foot, turned away the shot.

Defensively Ferdinand, who despite his bulk has spectacular lift-off, won hands down, heading away twice for corners. Cole looks gawky tackling back, like a seal out of water until he sniffs goal and becomes a sleek otter.

Whereas Ferdinand was a wall to play off, Cole's passing was incisive: short and intelligent, or long and accurate. One such rolled deliciously for Giggs, who strode on to it but saw his shot rattle the crossbar. By the time Cole began to revert to his previous hit-and-miss form, Keane had wrapped the game up.

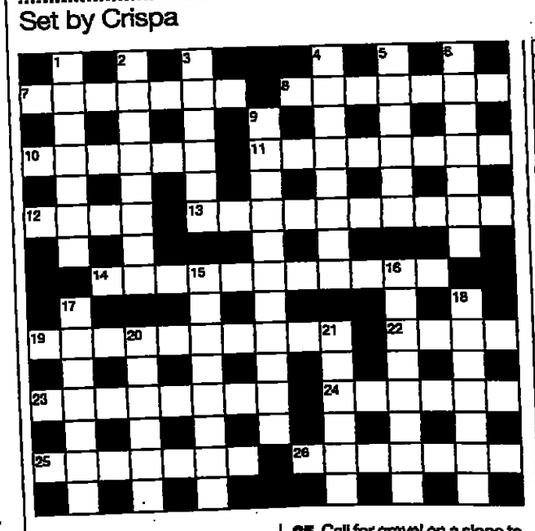
"I suppose," said the tea lady, "everyone will say this is the point where United's season starts." Maybe not United's, but possibly Andy Cole's.

Barely six months later, her father and another man stood accused of an horrific murder. It had allegedly taken place 26 years earlier, when Sievek was just three. Yet it was she who stood and related how she had watched her father bring home a woman, rape her and dispose of her body by setting a fire in a rural farmhouse.

G2 page eight

Guardian Crossword No 20,534

Set by Crispa

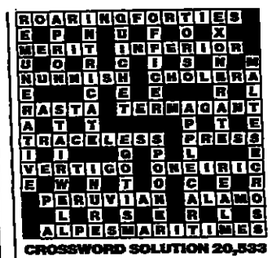


Across

7 The army officer's blanket (7)
8 Ready to accommodate father and gas (7)
10 Cloak maker's lament (6)
11 Bishops get reports on the quiet (8)
12 Winger in demand for international games (4)
13 Dropping out of the competition — a sign of irritation (10)
14 Sportsman providing Sherlock Holmes with capital cover (11)
19 The count so ill-used this Shakespearean character (10)
22 A bakery's turnover? (4)
23 A country without an alternative prospect (8)
24 The person shooting birds, having the right (6)
25 Call for gravel on a slope to the church (7)
26 Change is great in the main (3-4)

Down

1 Got less tense when cut after about fifty (7)
2 Condemn in just a few words (8)
3 Looked up about the German footwear (6)
4 Possibly a Japanese relation — quite possibly (8)
5 The money going in rent is all for show (6)
6 The underworld presume on back-up (7)
9 Working left to choice — about time! (11)
15 Here cars get dismantled for scientific examination (8)
16 They may well depend on women (8)
17 An Italian engineer's tall tale (7)
18 Brisk instruction, legal or otherwise (7)
20 Many an also-ran could be better-matched (6)
21 Resulted from getting the wind up about petition (6)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,533

Solution tomorrow

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